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THE SILENT DECLARATION.

OCEOLA.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID:

AUTHOR OF

"THE RIFLE RANGERS," "THE SCALP HUNTERS," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1859.

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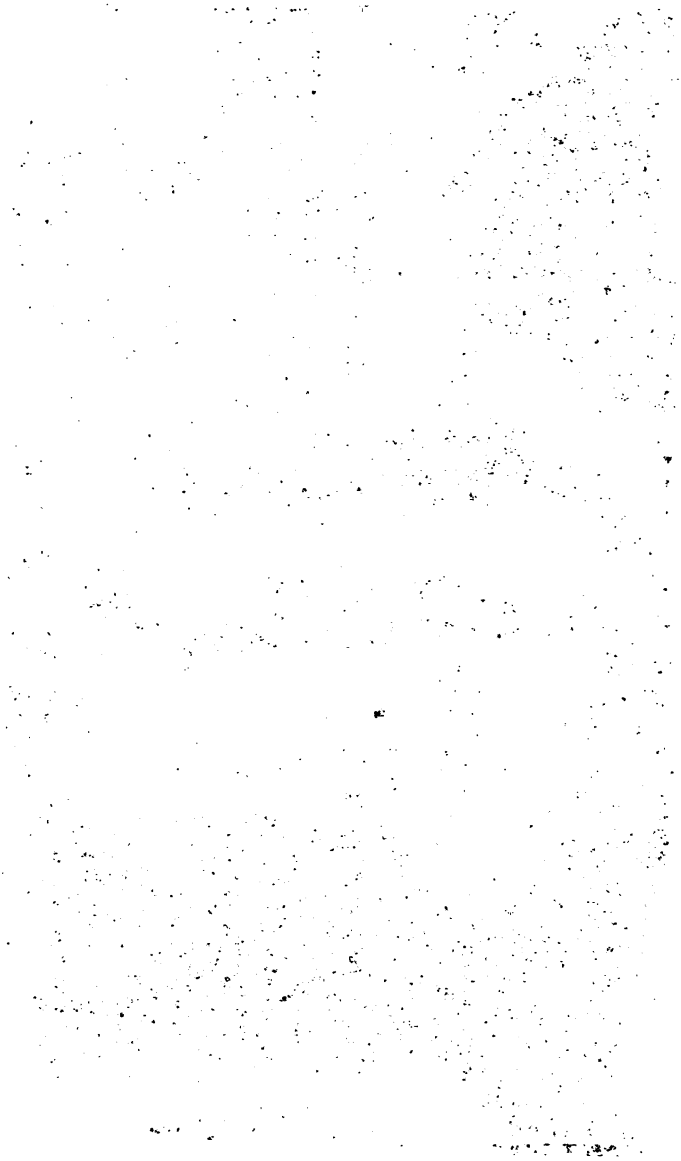
249. a. 526.



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BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

OÇEOLA.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAITOR CHIEFS.

Soon after, I retired from the mess-table, and strolled out into the stockade.

It was now after sunset. Orders had been issued for no one to leave the fort; but, translating these as only applicable to the common soldier, I resolved to sally forth.

I was guided by an impulse of the heart. In the Indian camp were the wives of the chiefs and warriors—their sisters and children—why not she among the rest?

I had a belief that she was there—although, during all that day, my eyes had been wandering in vain search. She was not among those who had crowded around the council: not a face had escaped my scrutiny.

I resolved to seek the Seminole camp—to go among the tents of the Micosaucs—there, in all likelihood, I should find Powell—there I should meet with Maümee.

There would be no danger in entering the Indian camp—even the hostile chiefs were yet in relations of friendship with us; and surely Powell was still *my* friend? He could protect me from peril or insults.

I felt a longing to grasp the hand of the young warrior, that of itself would have influenced me to seek the interview. I yearned to renew the friendly confidence of the past—to talk over those pleasant times—to recall those scenes of halcyon brightness. Surely the sterner duties of the chief and war-leader had not yet indurated a heart, once mild and

amiable? No doubt the spirit of my former friend was embittered by the white man's injustice; no doubt I should find him rancorous against our race; he had reason—still I had no fears that I myself was not an exception to this wholesale resentment.

Whatever the result, I resolved to seek him, and once more extend to him the hand of friendship.

I was on the eve of setting forth, when a summons from the Commander-in-chief called me to his quarters. With some chagrin, I obeyed the order.

I found the commissioner there, with the officers of higher rank — the Ringgolds, and several other civilians of distinction.

On entering, I perceived that they were in "caucus," and had just ended the discussion of some plan of procedure.

"The design is excellent," observed General Clinch, addressing himself to the others; "but

how are Omatla and "Black Dirt"* to be met? If we summon them hither, it may create suspicion: they could not enter the fort without being observed."

"General Clinch," said the elder Ringgold —the most cunning diplomatist of the party —"if you and General Thompson were to meet the friendly chiefs outside?—"

"Exactly so," interrupted the commissioner. "I have been thinking of that; I have sent a messenger to Omatla, to inquire if he can give us a secret meeting. It will be best to see them outside. The man has returned—I hear him."

At this moment, a person entered the room, whom I recognised as one of the interpreters who had officiated at the council. He whispered something to the commissioner, and then withdrew.

* So Lusta Hajo was called by the Americans. His full name was Fuchta-Lusta-Hajo, which signifies, "Black Crazy Clay."

"All right, gentlemen!" exclaimed the latter, as the interpreter went out: "Omatla will meet us within the hour. Black Dirt will be with him. They have named the 'Sink' as the place. It lies to the north of the fort. We can reach it without passing the camp, and there will be no risk of our being observed. Shall we go, general?"

"I am ready," replied Clinch, taking up his cloak, and throwing it over his shoulders; "but, General Thompson," said he, turning to the commissioner, "how about your interpreters? Can they be intrusted with a secret of so much importance?"

The commissioner appeared to hesitate.

"It might be imprudent," he replied at length, in a half-soliloquy.

"Never mind then — never mind," said Clinch; "I think we can do without them. Lieutenant Randolph," continued he, turning to me, "you speak the Seminole tongue fluently?"

"Not fluently, general; I speak it, however."

"You could interpret it fairly."

"Yes, general; I believe so."

"Very well then; that will do. Come with us!"

Smothering my vexation at being thus diverted from my design, I followed in silence—the commissioner leading the way, while the general, disguised in cloak and plain forage-cap, walked by his side.

We passed out of the gate, and turned northward around the stockade. The tents of the Indians were upon the south-west, placed irregularly along the edge of a broad belt of "hommocky" woods that extended in that direction. Another tract of hommock lay to the north, separated from the larger one by savannas and open forests of pine-timber. Here was the "Sink." It was nearly half a mile distant from the stockade; but in the darkness we could

easily reach it without being observed from any part of the Seminole camp.

We soon arrived upon the ground. The chiefs were before us. We found them standing under the shadows of the trees by the edge of the pond.

My duty now began. I had little anticipation that it was to have been so disagreeable.

"Ask Omatla what is the number of his people—also those of Black Dirt and the other chiefs who are for us."

I put the question as commanded.

"One-third of the whole Seminole nation," was the ready reply.

"Tell them that ten thousand dollars shall be given to the friendly chiefs, on their arrival in the west, to be shared among them as they deem best—that this sum is independent of the appropriation to the whole tribe."

"It is good," simultaneously grunted the

chiefs, when the proposition was explained to them.

"Does Omatla and his friends think that all the chiefs will be present to-morrow?"

"No—not all."

"Which of them are likely to be absent?"

"The mico-mico will not be there."

"Ha! Is Omatla sure of that?"

"Sure. Onopa's tents are struck: he has already left the ground."

"Whither has he gone?"

"Back to his town."

"And his people?"

"Most of them gone with him."

For some moments the two generals communicated together in a half-whisper. They were apart from me: I did not hear what they said. The information just acquired was of great importance, and seemed not to discontent them.

"Any other chief likely to be absent to-morrow?" they asked, after a pause.

"Only those of the tribe of 'red-sticks.'" *

"Hoitle-mattee?"

"No—he is here—he will remain."

"Ask them if they think *Oçeola* will be at the council to-morrow."

From the eagerness with which the answer was expected, I could perceive that this was the most interesting question of all. I put it directly.

"What!" exclaimed the chiefs, as if astonished at the interrogatory. "The Rising Sun! He is sure to be present: he will *see it out!*"

"Good!" involuntarily ejaculated the commissioner, and then turning to the general, he once more addressed him in

* A name given to the Micosaucs, from their custom of setting up red poles in front of their houses when going to war. A similar custom exists among other tribes; hence the name "Baton rouge," applied by the French colonists.

a low tone. This time, I overheard what passed between them.

"It seems, general, as if Providence was playing into our hands. My plan is almost sure to succeed. A word will provoke the impudent rascal to some rudeness—perhaps worse—at all events, I shall easily find a pretext for shutting him up. Now that Onopa has drawn off his following, we will be strong enough for any contingency. The hostiles will scarcely outnumber the friendlies, so that there will be no chance of the rascals making resistance."

"Oh! that we need not fear."

"Well—with *him* once in our power, the opposition will be crushed—the rest will yield easily—for, beyond doubt, it is he that now intimidates and hinders them from signing."

"True," replied Clinch in a reflective tone; "but how about the government,

eh? Will it endorse the act, think you?"

"It will—it must—my latest dispatch from the President almost suggests as much. If you agree to act, I shall take the risk."

"Oh, I place myself under your orders," replied the commander-in-chief, evidently inclined to the commissioner's views, but still not willing to share the responsibility. "It is but my duty to carry out the will of the executive. I am ready to co-operate with you."

"Enough then—it shall be done as we have designed it. Ask the chiefs," continued the speaker, addressing himself to me, "ask them, if they have any fear of signing to-morrow."

"No—not of the signing, but *afterwards.*"

"And what afterwards?"

"They dread an attack from the hostile party—their lives will be in danger."

"What would they have us do?"

"Omatla says, if you will permit him and the other head-chiefs to go on a visit to their friends at Tallahassee, it will keep them out of danger. They can stay there till the removal is about to take place. They give their promise that they will meet you at Tampa, or elsewhere, whenever you summon them."

The two generals consulted together—once more in whispers. This unexpected proposal required consideration.

Omatla added:—

"If we are not allowed to go to Tallahassee, we cannot, we dare not, stay at home; we must come under the protection of the fort."

"About your going to Tallahassee," replied the commissioner, "we shall consider it, and give you an answer to-morrow. Meanwhile, you need not be under any apprehension. This is the war-chief of the whites; he will protect you."

"Yes," said Clinch, drawing himself proudly up. "My warriors are numerous and strong. There are many in the fort, and many more on the way. You have nothing to fear."

"It is good!" rejoined the chiefs. "If troubles arise, we shall seek your protection; you have promised it — it is good."

"Ask the chiefs," said the commissioner, to whom a new question had suggested itself—"ask them if they know whether Holata Mico will remain for the council of to-morrow."

"We cannot tell now. Holata Mico has not declared his intention. We shall soon know it. If he design to stay, his tents will stand till the rising of the sun; if not, they will be struck before the moon goes down. The moon is sinking—we shall soon know whether Holata Mico will go or stay."

"The tents of this chief are not within sight of the fort?"

"No—they are back among the trees."

"Can you send word to us?"

"Yes, but only to this place; our messenger would be seen entering the fort. We can come back here ourselves, and meet one from you."

"True—it is better so," replied the commissioner, apparently pleased with the arrangement.

A few minutes passed, during which the two generals communicated with each other in whispers, while the chiefs stood apart, silent and immobile as a pair of statues.

The commander-in-chief at length broke silence:—

"Lieutenant! you will remain upon the ground till the chiefs return. Get their report, and bring it direct to my quarters."

Salutations were exchanged; the two

generals walked off on the path that led to the fort, while the chiefs glided silently away in the opposite direction. I was left alone.

CHAPTER II.

SHADOWS IN THE WATER.

ALONE with my thoughts, and these tainted with considerable acerbity. More than one cause contributed to their bitterness. My pleasant purpose thwarted—my heart aching for knowledge—for a renewal of tender ties—distracted with doubts—wearied with protracted suspense.

In addition to these, my mind was harassed by other emotions. I experienced disgust at the part I had been playing. I had been made the mouthpiece of chicanery and wrong; aiding conspiracy had

been the first act of my warlike career; and although it was not the act of my own will, I felt the disagreeableness of the duty—a sheer disgust in its performance.

Even the loveliness of the night failed to soothe me. Its effect was contrary: a storm would have been more congenial to my spirit.

And it was a lovely night. Both the earth and the air were at peace.

Here and there, the sky was fleeced with white cirrhi, but so thinly that the moon's disk, passing behind them, appeared to move under a transparent gauze-work of silver, without losing one ray of her effulgence. Her light was resplendent in the extreme; and, glancing from the glabrous leaves of the great laurels, caused the forest to sparkle, as though beset with a million of mirrors. To add to the effect, fire-flies swarmed under the shadows of the trees, their

bodies lighting up the dark aisles with a mingled coruscation of red, blue, and gold —now flitting in a direct line, now curving, or waving upward and downward, as though moving through the mazes of some intricate *cotillon*.

In the midst of this glittering array lay the little tarn, shining, too, but with the gleam of plated glass—a mirror in its frame-work of fretted gild.

The atmosphere was redolent of the most agreeable perfumes. The night was cool enough for human comfort, but not chill. Many of the flowers refused to close their corollas—for not all of them were brides of the sun. The moon had its share of their sweets. The sassafras and bay-trees were in blossom, and dispensed their odours around, that, mingling with the aroma of the aniseed and orange, created a delicious fragrance in the air.

There was stillness in the atmosphere, but

not silence. It is never silent in the southern forest by night. Tree-frogs and cicadas utter their shrillest notes after the sun has gone out of sight, and there is a bird that makes choice melody during the moonlight hours—the famed mimic of the American woods. One, perched upon a tall tree that grew over the edge of the pond, appeared trying to soothe my chafed spirit with his sweet notes.

I heard other sounds—the hum of the soldiery in the fort, mingling with the more distant noises from the Indian camp. Now and then some voice louder than the rest, in oath, exclamation, or laughter, broke forth to interrupt the monotonous murmur.

How long should I have to wait the return of the chiefs? It might be an hour, or two hours, or more? I had a partial guide in the moon. They said that Holata would depart before the shining orb went down, or not at all. About two hours, then, would decide the point, and set me free.

I had been standing for half the day. I cared not to keep my feet any longer; and, choosing a fragment of rock near the water's edge, I sat down upon it.

My eyes wandered over the pond. Half of its surface lay in shadow; the other half was silvered by the moonbeams, that, penetrating the pellucid water, rendered visible the white shells and shining pebbles at the bottom. Along the line where the light and darkness met, were outlined several noble palms, whose tall stems and crested crowns appeared stretching away towards the nadir of the earth—as though they belonged to another and brighter firmament beneath my feet. The trees, of which these were but the illusory images, grew upon the summit of a ridge, which, trending along the western side of the pond, intercepted the rays of the moon.

I sat for some time gazing into this counterpart of heaven's canopy, with my

eyes mechanically tracing the great fan-like fronds.

All at once, I was startled at perceiving a new image upon the aqueous reflector. A form, or rather the shadow of one, suddenly appeared among the trunks of the palms. It was upright, and evidently human, though of magnified proportions—beyond doubt, a human figure, yet not that of a man.

The small head, apparently uncovered, the gentle rounding of the shoulders, the soft undulation of the waist, and the long, loose draping which reached nearly to the ground, convinced me that the shadow was that of a woman.

When I first observed it, it was moving among the stems of the palm-trees; presently it stopped, and for some seconds remained in a fixed attitude. It was then I noted the peculiarities that distinguish the sex.

My first impulse was to turn round, and, if possible, get sight of the figure that cast

this interesting shadow. I was myself on the western edge of the pond, and the ridge was behind me. Facing round, I could not see the summit, nor yet the palms. Rising to my feet, I still could not see them; a large live oak, under which I had seated myself, intercepting my view.

I stepped hastily to one side, and then the outline both of the ridge and the palm-trees was before my eyes; but I could see no figure, neither of man nor woman.

I scanned the summit carefully, but no living thing was there; some fronds of the saw-palmetto, standing along the crest, were the only forms I could perceive.

I returned to where I had been seated; and, placing myself as before, again looked upon the water. The palm shadows were just as I had left them; but the image was gone.

There was nothing to be astonished at. I did not for a moment believe myself under

any delusion. Some one had been upon the ridge—a woman I supposed—and had passed down under cover of the trees. This was the natural explanation of what I had seen, and of course contented me.

At the same time, the silent apparition could not fail to arouse my curiosity; and, instead of remaining seated and giving way to dreamy reflections, I rose to my feet, and stood looking and listening with eager expectation.

Who could the woman be? An Indian, of course. It was not probable that a white woman would be in such a place, and at such an hour. Even the peculiar outlines of the shadow were not those that would have been cast by one habited in the garb of civilisation: beyond a doubt, the woman was an Indian.

What was she doing in that solitary place, and alone?

These questions were not so easily an-

swered; and yet there was nothing so remarkable about her presence upon the spot. To the children of the forest, time is not as with us. The hours of the night are as those of the day—often the hours of action or enjoyment. She might have many a purpose in being there. She might be on her way to the pond for water—to take a bath; or it might be some impassioned maiden, who, under the secret shadows of this secluded grove, was keeping assignation with her lover.

A pang, like a poisoned arrow, passed through my heart: "*Might it be Maüimee?*"

The unpleasantness which this conjecture caused me is indescribable. I had been all day the victim of dire suspicions, arising principally from some half-dozen words, casually dropped from the lips of a young officer, and which I had chanced to overhear. They had reference to a beautiful girl among the Indians, apparently well

known at the fort; and I noticed that the tone of the young fellow was that of one either triumphant or boasting. I listened attentively to every word, and watched not only the countenance of the speaker, but those of his auditory—to make out in which of the two categories I should place him. His vanity appeared to have had some sacrifice made to it—at least by his own statement; and his listeners, or most of them, agreed to concede to him the happiness of a *bonne fortune*. There was no name given — no hint that would enable me to connect the subject of the conversation with that of my own thoughts; but that the girl was an Indian, and a "beauty," were points that my jealous heart almost accepted as sufficient for identification.

I might easily have become satisfied. A word, a simple question, would have procured me the knowledge I longed for; and yet I dared not say that word. I preferred

passing long hours—a whole day—upon the rack of uncertainty and suspicion.

Thus, then, was I prepared for the painful conjectures that sprang into my thoughts on beholding that mirrored form.

The pain was of short duration; almost instantaneous was the relief. A shadowy figure was seen gliding around the edge of the pond; it emerged into the open moonlight, not six paces from where I stood. I had a full and distinct view of it. It was a woman—an Indian woman. It was *not* Maümee.

CHAPTER III.

HAJ-EWA.

I SAW before me a woman of middle age—somewhere between thirty and forty—a large woman, who once possessed beauty—beauty that had been abused. She was the wreck of a grand loveliness, whose outlines could not be effaced—like the statue of some Grecian goddess, broken by Vandal hands, but whose very fragments are things of priceless value.

Not that her charms had departed. There are men who affect to admire this ripe maturity; to them she would have been a thing

of peerless splendour. Time had made no inroad upon those large rounded arms, none upon the elliptical outlines of that noble bust. I could judge of this; for it was before my eyes, in the bright moonlight, nude, from neck to waist, as in the hour of infancy. Alone the black hair, hanging in wild dishevelment over the shoulders, formed a partial shrouding. Nor had time laid a finger upon this: amidst all that profusion of rich raven clusters, not a strand of silver could be detected.

Time could not affect, nor had it, that fine facial outline. The moulding of the chin; the oval of those lips; the aquiline nose, with its delicate spirally curved nostril; the high, smooth front; the eye—the eye—what is it?—why that unearthly flash? that wild unmeaning glance? Ha! that eye—— Merciful heavens! *the woman is mad!*

Alas! it was true—she was mad. Her

glance would have satisfied even a casual observer that reason was no longer upon its throne. But I needed not to look at her eye; I knew the story of her misfortunes, of her wrongs. It was not the first time I had looked upon that womanly form—more than once I had stood face to face with Haj-Ewa,* the mad queen of the Micosaucs.

Beautiful as she was, I might have felt fear at her presence; still worse than fear, I might have been terrified or awed; the more so on perceiving that her necklace was a green serpent; that the girdle around her waist, that glittered so conspicuously in the light of the moon, was the body of an enormous rattlesnake, living and writhing!

* Literally, "crazy wife," from *Hajo*, crazy, and *Ewa*, or *Awah*, wife. Philologists have remarked the resemblance of this Muscogee word to the Hebraic name of the mother of mankind.

Yes, both were alive; the smaller serpent wound about her neck, with its head resting upon her bosom; the more dangerous reptile knotted around her waist, its vertebrated tail hanging by her side, while its head, held in her hand, and protruding through her fingers, exhibited a pair of eyes that scintillated like diamonds.

On the head of Haj-Ewa was no other covering than that which nature had provided for it; but those thick black clusters afforded ample protection against sun and storm. On her feet she wore moccasins, but these were hidden by the long "hunna" that reached to the ground. This was the only garment she wore. It was profusely adorned with beads and embroidery—with the bright plumage of the green parroquet—the skin of the summer-duck, and the fur of various wild animals. It was fastened round her waist, though not by the girdle already described.

Truly, I might have felt terror, had this

singular appearance been new to me. But I had seen all before; the green snake, and the *crotalus*, the long hanging tresses, the wild flash of that maniac eye—all before, all harmless, all innocuous; at least to me. I knew it, and had no fear.

"Haj-Ewa!" I called out, as she advanced to where I was standing.

"I-e-ela!"* exclaimed she with a show of surprise. "Young Randolph! war-chief among the pale faces! You have not then forgotten poor Haj-Ewa?"

"No, Ewa, I have not. What seek you here?"

"Yourself, little mico."

"Seek *me?*"

"No—I have found you."

"And what want you with me?"

"Only to save your life—your young life, pretty mico—your fair life—your precious

* An expression of astonishment, usually lengthened out in a sort of drawl.

life—ah! precious to her, poor bird of the forest! Ah! there was one precious to me—long, long ago. Ho, ho, ho!

O why did I trust in a pale-faced lover?
Ho, ho, ho!
Why did I meet him in the wild woods' cover?
Ho, ho, ho!
Why did I list to his lying tongue,
That poisoned my heart when my life was young?
Ho, ho, ho!*

"Down, *chitta mico!*"† she cried, interrupting the strain, and addressing herself to the rattlesnake, that at my presence had protruded his head, and was making demonstrations of rage; "down, great king of the serpents! 'tis a friend, though in the garb of an enemy; quiet, or I crush your head!"

* Literally, Yes, yes, yes!

† "Chief of the snakes"—the rattlesnake is so styled by the Seminoles, being the most remarkable serpent in their country. They have a superstitious dread of this reptile.

"I-e-ela!" she exclaimed again, as if struck by some new thought; "I waste time with my old songs; he is gone, he is gone! they cannot bring him back. Now, young mico, what came I for? what came I for?"

As she uttered these interrogatives, she raised her hand to her head, as if to assist her memory.

"Oh! now I remember. *Halwuk!** I lose time. You may be killed, young mico—you may be killed, and then —— Go! begone, begone, begone! back to the topekee.† Shut yourself up; keep among your people; do not stray from your blue soldiers; do not wander in the woods! Your life is in danger!"

All this was spoken in a tone of earnestness that astonished me. More than astonished, I began to feel some slight alarm, since I had not forgotten the attempted assassination of

* It is bad. † Fort.

yesterday. Moreover, I knew that there were periods when this singular woman was not positively insane. She had her lucid intervals, during which she both talked and acted rationally, and often with extraordinary intelligence. This might be one of those intervals. She might be privy to some scheme against my life, and had come, as she alleged, to defeat it.

But who was my enemy or enemies? and how could she have known of their design?

In order to ascertain this, I said to her:—

"I have no enemy, Ewa; why should my life be in danger?"

"I tell you, pretty mico, it is; you have enemies. I-e-ela! you do not know it?"

"I never wronged a red man in my life."

"Red—did I say red man? *Cooree,** pretty

* No.

Randolph, there is not a red man in all the land of the Seminolée that would pluck a hair from your head. Oh! if they did, what would say the Rising Sun. He would consume them like a forest fire. Fear not the red men — your enemies are not of that colour."

"Ha! not red men? What then?"

"Some white—some yellow."

"Nonsense, Ewa! I have never given a white man cause to be my enemy."

"*Chepawnee!** you are but a young fawn, whose mother has not told it of the savage beasts that roam the forest. There are wicked men who are enemies without a cause. There are some who seek your life, though you never did them wrong."

"But who are they? And for what reason?"

"Do not ask, chepawnee! There is not time. Enough if I tell you, you are

* Boy.

owner of a rich plantation, where black men make the blue dye. You have a fair sister—very fair. Is she not like a beam from yonder moon? And I was fair once—so he said— Ah! it is bad to be beautiful. Ho, ho, ho!

Why did I trust in a pale-faced lover?
Ho, ho, ho!
Why did I meet him—

"*Halwuk!*" she exclaimed, again suddenly breaking off the strain: "I am mad; but I remember. Go! begone! I tell you, go: you are but an *echochee*,* and the hunters are upon your trail. Back to the topekee—go! go!"

"I cannot, Ewa; I am here for a purpose; I must remain till some one comes."

"Till some one comes! *halwuk! they* will come soon."

* Fawn.

"Who?"

"Your enemies—they who would kill you; and then the pretty doe will bleed —her poor heart will bleed: she will go mad —she will be like Haj-Ewa."

"Whom do you speak of?"

"Of— Hush! hush! hush! It is too late — they come—they come! see their shadows upon the water!"

I looked, as Haj-Ewa pointed. Sure enough there were shadows upon the pond, just where I had seen hers. They were the figures of men—four of them. They were moving among the palm-trees, and along the ridge.

In a few seconds the shadows disappeared. They who had been causing them had descended the slope, and entered among the timber.

"It is too late now," whispered the maniac, evidently at that moment in full possession of her intellect. "You dare not go out into

the open woods. They would see you—you must stay in the thicket. There!" continued she, grasping me by the wrist, and, with a powerful jerk, bringing me close to the trunk of the live oak: "this is your only chance. Quick — ascend; conceal yourself among the moss. Be silent—stir not till I return. *Hinklas!*" *

And so saying, my strange counsellor stepped back under the shadow of the tree; and gliding into the umbrageous covert of the grove, disappeared from my sight.

I had followed her directions, and was now ensconced upon one of the great limbs of the live oak—perfectly hidden from the eyes of any one below by festoons of the silvery *tillandsia*. These, hanging from branches still higher up, draped around me like a set of gauze curtains, and completely enveloped my whole body; while I myself had a view of the pond—at least, that side

* It is good—it is well.

of it on which the moon was shining —by means of a small opening between the leaves.

At first I fancied I was playing a very ridiculous *rôle*. The story about enemies, and my life being in danger, might, after all, be nothing more than some crazy fancy of the poor maniac's brain. The men whose shadows I had seen might be the chiefs on their return. They would reach the ground where I had appointed to meet them, and not finding me there, would go back. What kind of report should I carry to head-quarters? The thing was ridiculous enough —and, for me, the result might be worse than ridiculous.

Under these reflections, I felt strongly inclined to descend, and meet the men—whoever they might be—face to face.

Other reflections, however, hindered me. The chiefs were only *two*—there were *four* shadows. True, the chiefs might be ac-

companied by some of their followers—for better security to themselves on such a traitorous mission—but I had noticed, as the shadows were passing over the pond—and notwithstanding the rapidity with which they moved—that the figures were not *those of Indians.* I observed no hanging drapery, nor plumes. On the contrary, I fancied there were hats upon their heads, such as are worn only by white men. It was the observation of this peculiarity that made me so ready to yield obedience to the solicitations of Haj-Ewa.

Other circumstances had not failed to impress me: the strange assertions made by the Indian woman—her knowledge of events, and the odd allusions to well-known persons—the affair of yesterday: all these, commingling in my mind, had the effect of determining me to remain upon my perch, as least for some minutes longer.

I might be relieved from my unpleasant position sooner than I expected.

Without motion, almost without breathing, I kept my seat, my eyes carefully watching, and ears keenly bent to catch every sound.

My suspense was brief. The acuteness of my eyes was rewarded by a sight, and my ears by a tale, that caused my flesh to creep, and the blood to run cold in my veins. In five minutes' time, I was inducted into a belief in the wickedness of the human heart, exceeding in enormity all that I had ever read or heard of.

Four demons filed before me—demons, beyond a doubt: their looks, which I noted well—their words, which I heard—their gestures, which I saw—their designs, with which I in that hour became acquainted—fully entitled them to the appellation.

They were passing around the pond. I

saw their faces, one after another, as they emerged into the moonlight.

Foremost appeared the pale, thin visage of Arens Ringgold; next, the sinister aquiline features of Spence; and, after him, the broad brutal face of the bully Williams.

There were *four*—who was the fourth?

"Am I dreaming? Do my eyes deceive me? Is it real? Is it an illusion? Are my senses gone astray—or is it only a resemblance, a counterpart. No—no—no! It is no counterpart, but the man himself!—that black curling hair, that tawny skin, the form, the gait—all, all are his. *O God! it is Yellow Jake!*"

CHAPTER IV.

A PRETTY PLOT.

To dispute the identity was to doubt the evidence of my senses. The mulatto was before me—just as I remembered him—though with changed apparel, and perhaps grown a little bigger in body. But the features were the same—the *tout ensemble* the same, as that presented by Yellow Jake, the *ci-devant* woodman of our plantation.

And yet how could it *possibly* be he? And in the company of Arens Ringgold, too, one of the most active of his intended executioners? No, no, no! altogether im-

probable—utterly impossible! Then must I be deluded—my eyes deceiving me—for as certain as I looked upon man, I was looking upon Jake the mulatto! He was not twenty feet from where I lay hidden; his face was full towards me; the moon was shining upon it with a brilliancy scarcely inferior to the light of day. I could note the old expression of evil in his eyes, and mark the play of his features. It *was* Yellow Jake.

To confirm the impression, I remembered that, notwithstanding all remonstrance and ridicule, the black pertinaciously adhered to his story. He would listen to no compromise, no hypothesis founded upon resemblance. He had seen Yellow Jake, or his ghost. This was his firm belief, and I had been unable to shake it.

Another circumstance I now remembered: the strange behaviour of the Ringgolds during the post-prandial conversation—the action of

Arens when I mentioned the mulatto's name. It had attracted my attention at the time, but what was I to think now? Here was a man supposed to be dead, in company of three others who had been active in assisting at his death—one of them the very keenest of his executioners, and all four now apparently as thick as thieves. How was I to explain, in one moment, this wonderful resurrection and reconciliation?

I could not explain it—it was too complicated a mystery to be unravelled by a moment's reflection; and I should have failed, had not the parties themselves soon after aided me to an elucidation.

I had arrived at the only natural conclusion, and this was, that the mulatto, notwithstanding the perfect resemblance, *could not be* Yellow Jake. This, of course, would account for everything, after a manner; and had the four men gone away without parley, I should have contented myself with this hypothesis.

But they went not, until after affording me an opportunity of overhearing a conversation, which gave me to know that not only was Yellow Jake *still in the land of the living*, but that Haj-Ewa had spoken the truth, when she told me *my life was in danger.*

"D——! he's not here, and yet where can he have gone?"

The ejaculation and interrogative were in the voice of Arens Ringgold, uttered in a tone of peevish surprise. Some one was sought for by the party, who could not be found. Who that was, the next speaker made manifest.

There was a pause, and then reached my ears the voice of Bill Williams—which I easily recognised, from having heard it but the day before.

"You are sartint, Master Arens, he didn't sneak back to the fort 'long wi' the ginral?"

"Sure of it," replied "Master Arens;" "I was by the gate as they came in. There

was only the two—the general and the commissioner. But the question is, did he leave the hommock along with them? There's where we played devil's fool with the business—in not getting here in time, and watching them as they left. But who'd have thought he was going to stay behind them? If I had only known that—— You say," he continued, turning to the mulatto, "you say, *Jake*, you came direct from the Indian camp? He couldn't have passed you on the path."

"*Carajo! Señor* Aren! No!"

The voice, the old Spanish expression of profanity, just as I had heard them in my youth. If there had been doubt of the identity, it was gone. The testimony of my ears confirmed that of my eyes. The speaker was Yellow Jake.

"Straight from Seminole come. Cat no pass me on the road; I see her. Two chiefs me meet. I hide under the palmettoes; they no me see. *Carrambo!* no."

"Deuce take it! where can he have gone? There's no signs of him here. I know he *might have a reason* for paying a visit to the Indians—that I know; but how has he got round there without Jake seeing him?"

"What's to hinder him to hev goed round the tother road?"

"By the open plain?"

"Yes—that away."

"No—he would not be likely. There's only one way I can explain it: he must have come as far as the gate along with the general, and then kept down the stockade, and past the sutler's house—that's likely enough."

This was said by Ringgold in a sort of half-soliloquy.

"Devils!" he exclaimed in an impatient tone, "we'll not get such a chance soon again."

"Ne'er a fear, Master Arens," said Williams—"ne'er a fear. Plenty o' chances, I

kalkerlate—gobs o' chances sech times as these."

"We'll make chances," pithily added Spence, who now spoke for the first time in my hearing.

"Ay, but here was a chance for *Jake*—*he* must do it, boys; neither of you must have a hand in it. It *might leak out;* and then we'd all be in a pretty pickle. Jake can do it, and not harm himself, for *he's deàd,* you know, and the law can't reach him! Isn't it so, my yellow boy?"

"*Carrambo! si, señor.* No fear have, Don Aren Ringgol; 'fore long, I opportunty find. Jake you get rid of enemy—never hear more of him; soon Yellow Jake good chance have. Yesterday miss. She bad gun, Don Aren—not worth shuck gun."

"He has not yet returned inside the fort," remarked Ringgold, again speaking in a half-soliloquy. "I think he has not. If no, then he should be at the camp. He must go back

to-night. It may be after the moon goes down. He must cross the open ground in the darkness. You hear, Jake, what I am saying?"

"Si, señor; Jake hear all."

"And you know how to profit by the hint, eh?"

"*Carrambo! si, señor.* Jake know."

"Well, then, we must return. Hear me, Jake—if—"

Here the voice of the speaker fell into a half-whisper, and I could not hear what was said. Occasionally there were phrases muttered so loudly that I could catch their sound, and from what had already transpired, was enabled to apprehend something of their signification. I heard frequently pronounced the names of Viola the quadroon, and that of my own sister; the phrases—"only one that stands in our way"—"mother easily consent"—"when I am master of the plantation"—"pay you two hundred dollars."

These, with others of like import, satisfied me that between the two fiends some contract for the taking of my life had already been formed; and that this muttered dialogue was only a repetition of the terms of the hideous bargain!

No wonder that the cold sweat was oozing from my temples, and standing in bead-like drops upon my brow. No wonder that I sat upon my perch shaking like an aspen—far less with fear than with horror at the contemplated crime — absolute horror. I might have trembled in a greater degree, but that my nerves were to some extent stayed by the terrible indignation that was swelling up within my bosom.

I had sufficient command of my temper to remain silent; it was prudent I did so; had I discovered myself at that moment, I should never have left the ground alive. I felt certain of this, and took care to make no noise that might betray my presence.

And yet it was hard to hear four men coolly conspiring against one's life—plotting and bargaining it away like a piece of merchandise—each expecting some profit from the speculation!

My wrath was as powerful as my fears—almost too strong for prudence. There were four of them, all armed. I had a sword and pistols; but this would not have made a match for four desperadoes such as they. Had there been only two of them—only Ringgold and the mulatto—so desperate was my indignation, at that moment, I should have leaped from the tree and risked the encounter, *coûte que coûte.*

But I disobeyed the promptings of passion, and remained silent till they had moved away.

I observed that Ringgold and his brace of bullies went towards the fort, while the mulatto took the direction of the Indian camp.

CHAPTER V.

LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS.

I STIRRED not till they were gone—till long after. In fact, my mind was in a state of bewilderment, that for some moments hindered me either from acting or thinking; and I sat as if glued to the branch. Reflection came at length, and I began to speculate upon what I had just heard and seen.

Was it a farce to frighten me? No, no—they were not the characters for a farce—not one of the four; and the reappearance of Yellow Jake, partaking as it did of the wild and supernatural, was too dramatic, too serious to form an episode in comedy.

On the contrary, I had just listened to the prologue of an intended tragedy, of which I was myself to be the victim. Beyond doubt, these men had a design upon my life!

Four men, too, not one of whom could charge me with ever having done him a serious injury. I knew that all four disliked me, and ever had — though Spence and Williams could have no other cause of offence than what might spring from boyish grudge—long forgotten by me; but doubtless their motive was Ringgold's. As for the mulatto, I could understand his hostility; though mistaken, it was of the deadliest kind.

But what was I to think of Arens Ringgold, the leader in this designed assassination? A man of some education — my equal in social rank—a gentleman!

O Arens Ringgold—Arens Ringgold! How was I to explain it? How account for conduct so atrocious, so fiendish!

I knew that this young man liked me but little—of late, less than ever. I knew the cause, too. I stood in the way of his relations with my sister—at least so thought he. And he had reason; for, since my father's death, I had spoken more freely of family affairs. I had openly declared that, with my consent, he should never be my brother; and this declaration had reached him. I could easily believe, therefore, that he was angry with me; but anger that would impel a man to such demoniac purpose, I could not comprehend.

And what meant those half-heard phrases —"one that stands in our way," "mother easily consent," "master of the plantation," coupled with the names of Viola and my sister? What meant they?

I could give them but one, and that a terrible interpretation—too fearful to dwell upon.

I could scarcely credit my senses, scarcely

believe that I was not labouring under some horrid hallucination, some confusion of the brain produced by my having been *en rapport* with the maniac!

But no; the moon had been over them —my eyes upon them—my ears open, and could not have deceived me. I saw what they did — I heard what they said. They designed to kill me!

"Ho, ho, young mico, you may come down. The *honowaw-hulwa** are gone. *Hinklas!* Come down, pretty mico—down, down, down!"

I hastened to obey, and stood once more in the presence of the mad queen.

"Now you believe Haj-Ewa? Have an enemy, young mico? Ho — four enemies. Your life in danger? Ho? ho?"

"Ewa, you have saved my life; how am I to thank you for the service you have done me?"

* Bad men.

"Be true to *her*—true—true—true."

"To whom?"

"Great Spirit! he has forgotten her! False young mico! false pale-face! Why did I save him? Why did I not let his blood fall to the ground?"

"Ewa!"

"*Hulwak, hulwak!* Poor forest-bird! the beauty-bird of all; her heart will sicken and die, her head will go mad."

"Ewa, explain."

"*Hulwak!* better he should die than desert her. Ho, ho! false pale-face, would that he had died before he broke poor Ewa's heart; then Ewa would have lost only her heart; but her head—her head, that is worse. Ho, ho, ho!

Why did I trust in a pale-faced lover?
Ho, ho, ho!
Why did I meet him—"

"Ewa," I exclaimed, with an earnest-

ness that caused the woman to leave off her wild song, "tell me, of whom do you speak?"

"Great spirit, hear what he asks! Of whom?—of whom? there is more than one. Ho, ho! there is more than one, and the true one forgotten. *Hulwak, hulwak!* What shall Ewa say? What tale can Ewa tell? Poor bird! her heart will bleed, and her brain be crushed. Ho, ho! There will be two Haj-Ewas—two mad queens of the Micosaucs."

"For heaven's sake! keep me not in suspense. Tell me, Ewa, good Ewa, of whom you are speaking? Is it—"

The name trembled upon my tongue; I hesitated to pronounce it. Notwithstanding that my heart was full of delightful hope, from the confidence I felt of receiving an affirmative answer, I dreaded to put the question.

Not a great while did I hesitate;

I had gone too far to recede. I had long waited to satisfy the wish of a yearning heart; I could wait no longer. Ewa might give me the satisfaction. I pronounced the words:

"Is it—Maüimee?"

The maniac gazed upon me for some moments without speaking. The expression of her eye I could not read; for the last few minutes it had been one of reproach and scorn. As I uttered the name, it changed to a look of bewilderment; and then her glance became fixed upon me, as if searching my thoughts.

"If it be Maüimee," I continued, without awaiting her reply—for I was now carried away by the ardour of my resuscitated passion—"if it be she, know, Ewa, that her I love—Maüimee I love."

"You love Maüimee? You still love Maüimee?" interrogated the maniac with startling quickness.

"Ay, Ewa—by my life—by my—"

"*Cooree, cooree!* swear not—*his* very oath. *Hulwak!* and he was false. Speak again, young mico! say you love Maümee—say you are true, but do not swear."

"True, true!"

"*Hinklas!*" cried the woman in a loud, and apparently joyful tone—*Hinklas!* the mico is true—the pretty pale-faced mico is true, and the *haintclitz** will be happy.

Ho, ho!
Now for the love, the sweet young love
Under the *tala*† tree.
Who would not be like yonder dove—
The wild little dove—
The soft little dove—
Sitting close by his mate in the shade of the grove—
Co-cooing to his mate in the shade of the grove,
With none to hear or see?

"Down, *chitta mico*!" she exclaimed, once more addressing the rattlesnake; "and

* The pretty one. † Palm (*Chamærops palmetto*).

you, *ocola chitta*! * Be quiet both. It is *not* an enemy. Quiet, or I crush your heads!"

"Good Ewa—"

"Ho! you call me good Ewa. Some day, you may call me bad Ewa. Hear me!" she continued, raising her voice, and speaking with increased earnestness—"hear me, George Randolph! If ever you are bad, false like *him*, like *him*, then Haj-Ewa will be your enemy; the *chitta mico* will destroy you. You will, my king of serpents? you will? Ho, ho, ho!"

As she spoke, the reptile appeared to comprehend her, for its head was suddenly raised aloft, its bright basilisk eyes gleamed as though emitting sparks of fire—its forked, glittering tongue was protruded from its mouth, and the "skir-rr" of its rattles could be heard for some moments sounding continuously.

* Green snake.

"Quiet! now quiet!" said she, with a motion of her fingers, causing the serpent to resume its attitude of repose. "Not he, *chitta*, not he, thou king of the crawlers! Quiet, I say!"

"Why do you threaten me, Ewa? You have no cause."

"*Hinklas!* I believe it, fair mico, gallant mico; true, I believe it."

"But, good Ewa, explain to me—tell me of—"

"*Cooree, cooree!* not now—not to-night. There is no time, *chepawnee!* See! look yonder to the west! *Netle-hasse** is going to bed. You must be gone. You dare not walk in the darkness. You must get back to the *topekee* before the moon is hid. Go, go, go!"

"But I told you, Ewa, I had business here. I dare not leave till it is done."

"*Hulwak!* there is danger then. What

* The night-sun—the moon.

business, mico? Ah! I guess. See! they come for whom you wait?"

"True—it is they, I believe."

I said this, as I perceived the tall shadows of the two chiefs flitting along the further edge of the pond.

"Be quick, then: do what you must, but waste not time. In the darkness you will meet danger. Haj-Ewa must be gone. Good night, young mico; good night!"

I returned the salutation; and facing round to await the arrival of the chiefs, lost sight of my strange companion.

The Indians soon came upon the ground, and briefly delivered their report.

Holata Mico had struck his tents, and was moving away from the encampment.

I was too much disgusted with these traitorous men to spend a moment in their company; and, as soon as I had gained

the required information, I hurried away from their presence.

Warned by Haj-Ewa, as well as by the words of Arens Ringgold, I lost no time in returning to the fort. The moon was still above the horizon, and I had the advantage of her light to protect me from being surprised by any sudden onset.

I walked hastily, taking the precaution to keep in the open ground, and giving a wide berth to any covert that might shelter an assassin.

I saw no one on the way, nor around the back of the stockade. On arriving opposite the gate of the fort, however, I perceived the figure of a man—not far from the sutler's store—apparently skulking behind some logs. I fancied I knew the man; I fancied he was the mulatto.

I would have gone after him, and satisfied myself; but I had already hailed the sentinel, and given the countersign; and I

did not desire to cause a flurry among the guard—particularly as I had received injunctions to pass in as privately as possible.

Another time, I should likely encounter this Jacob *redivivus;* when I should be less embarrassed, and perhaps have a better opportunity of calling him and his diabolical associates to an account. With this reflection, I passed through the gate, and carried my report to the quarters of the Commander-in-chief.

CHAPTER VI.

IN NEED OF A FRIEND.

To pass the night under the same roof with the man who intends to murder you is anything but pleasant, and repose under the circumstances is next to impossible. I slept but little, and the little sleep I did obtain was not tranquil.

Before retiring for the night, I had seen nothing of the Ringgolds, neither father nor son; but I knew they were still in the fort, where they were to remain as guests a day or two longer. They had either gone to bed before my return, or

were entertained in the quarters of some friendly officer. At all events, they did not appear to me during the remainder of that night.

Neither saw I aught of Spence and Williams. These worthies, if in the fort, would find a lodgment among the soldiers, but I did not seek them.

Most of the night I lay awake, pondering on the strange incidents of the day, or rather upon that one episode that had made me acquainted with such deadly enemies.

I was in a state of sad perplexity as to what course I should pursue — uncertain all night long; and when daylight shone through the shutters, still uncertain.

My first impulse had been to disclose the whole affair at head-quarters, and demand an investigation—a punishment.

On reflection, this course would not do. What proofs could I offer of so grave an accusation? Only my own assertions, un-

backed by any other evidence—unsustained even by probability—for who would have given credence to crime so unparalleled in atrocity?

Though certain the assassins referred to me, I could not assert that they had even mentioned my name. My story would be treated with ridicule, myself perhaps with something worse. The Ringgolds were mighty men—personal friends of both the general and commissioner — and though known to be a little scoundrelly and unscrupulous in worldly affairs, still holding the rank of gentlemen. It would need better evidence than I could offer to prove Arens Ringgold a would-be murderer.

I saw the difficulty, and kept my secret.

Another plan appeared more feasible—to accuse Arens Ringgold openly before all, and challenge him to mortal combat. This, at least, would prove that I was sincere in my allegations.

But duelling was against the laws of the service. It would require some management to keep clear of an arrest—which of course would frustrate the scheme before satisfaction could be obtained. I had my own thoughts about Master Arens Ringgold. I knew his courage was but slippery. He would be likely enough to play the poltroon; but whether so or not, the charge and challenge would go some way towards exposing him.

I had almost decided on adopting this course, though it was morning before I had come to any determination.

I stood sadly in need of a friend; not merely a second — for this I could easily procure—but a bosom-companion in whom I could confide, and who might aid me by his counsel. As ill-luck would have it, every officer in the fort was a perfect stranger to me. With the Ringgolds alone had I any previous acquaintance.

In my dilemma, I thought of one whose advice might stand me in good stead, and I determined to seek it. Black Jake was the man—he should be my counsellor.

Shortly after daylight, the brave fellow was by my side. I told him all. He appeared very little surprised. Some suspicion of such a plot had already taken possession of his mind, and it was his intention to have revealed it to me that very morning. Least of all did he express surprise about Yellow Jake. That was but the confirmation of a belief, which he entertained already, without the shadow of a doubt. He knew positively that the mulatto was living—still more, he had ascertained the mode by which the latter had made his almost miraculous escape.

And yet it was simple enough. The alligator had seized him, as was supposed; but the fellow had the adroitness to "job" its eyes with the knife, and thus cause it

to let go its hold. He had followed the example of the young Indian, using the same weapon!

This occurred under water, for the mulatto was a good diver. His limbs were lacerated—hence the blood—but the wounds did not signify, nor did they hinder him from making further efforts to escape.

He took care not to rise to the surface until after swimming under the bank; there, concealed by the drooping branches, he had glided out, and climbed up into a live-oak — where the moss sheltered him from the eyes of his vengeful pursuers. Being entirely naked, there was no sign left by dripping garments, to betray him; besides, the blood upon the water had proved his friend. On seeing that, the hunters were under the full belief that he had "gone under," and therefore took but little pains to search further.

Such was Black Jake's account of this

affair. He had obtained it the evening before from one of the friendly Indians at the fort, who professed to have the narration from the mulatto's own lips.

There was nothing improbable in the story, but the contrary. In all likelihood, it was strictly true; and it at once dispersed the half-dozen mysteries that had gathered in my mind.

The black had received other information. The runaway had taken refuge with one of the half-negro tribes established amid the swamps that envelop the head waters of the Amazura. He had found favour among his new associates, had risen to be a chief, and now passed under the cognomen of the "Mulatto-mico."

There was still a little mystery: how came he and Arens Ringgold in "cahoot?"

After all, there was not much puzzle in the matter. The planter had no particular cause for hating the runaway. His activity

during the scene of the baffled execution was all a sham. The mulatto had more reason for resentment; but the loves or hates of such men are easily set aside — where self-interest interferes — and can, at any time, be commuted for gold.

No doubt the white villain had found the yellow one of service in some base undertaking, and *vice versâ*. At all events, it was evident that the "hatchet had been buried" between them, and their present relations were upon the most friendly footing.

"Jake!" said I, coming to the point on which I desired to hear his opinion, "what about Arens Ringgold — shall I call him out?"

"Golly, Massr George, he am out long 'go — I see um 'bout, dis two hour an' more — daat ar bossy doant sleep berry sound—he hant got da good conscience, I reck'n."

"Oh! that is not what I mean, my man."

"Wha—what massr mean?"

"To call him out—challenge him to fight me."

"Whugh! massr, d'you mean say a dewel ob sword an' pistol?"

"Swords, pistols, or rifles—I care not which weapon he may choose."

"Gorramity! Massr George, don't talk ob sech a thing. O Lordy! no—you hab moder—you hab sister. 'Spose you get kill—who know—tha bullock he sometime kill the butcha—den, Massr George, no one lef—who lef take care ob ya moder?—who be guardium ob ya sister Vagin? who 'tect Viola—who 'tect all ob us from dese bad bad men? Gorramity! massr, let um 'lone—doant call 'im out!"

At that moment, I was myself called out. The earnest appeal was interrupted by the braying of bugles and the rolling of drums,

announcing the assembly of the council; and without waiting to reply to the disinterested remonstrance of my companion, I hastened to the scene of my duties.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FINAL ASSEMBLY.

THE spectacle of yesterday was repeated; the troops in serried lines of blue and steel; the officers in full uniform with shining epaulettes; in the centre the staff grouped around the general, close buttoned, and of brilliant sheen; fronting these the half-circle of chiefs, backed by concentric lines of warriors, plumed, painted, and picturesque; horses standing near, some neighing under ready saddles, some picketed and quietly browsing; Indian women in their long *ḫunnas*, hurrying to and fro; boys and babes at play upon the grass;

flags waving above the soldiers; banners and pennons floating over the heads of the red warriors; drums beating — bugles braying; such was the array.

Again the spectacle was imposing, yet scarcely so much as that of the preceding day. The eye at once detected a deficiency in the circle of the chiefs, and nearly half of the warriors were wanting. The assemblage no longer impressed you with the idea of a multitude; it was only a respectable crowd, with room enough for all to gather close around the council.

The absence of many chiefs was at once perceived. King Onopa was not there. The coronet of British brass—lackered symbol of royalty, yesterday conspicuous in the centre—was no longer to be seen. Holata Mico was missing, with other leaders of less note; and the thinness in the ranks of the common warriors shewed that these chiefs had taken their followers along with them. Most of

the Indians on the ground appeared to be of the clans of Omatla, "Black Dirt," and Ohala.

Notwithstanding the fewness of their following, I saw that Hoitle-mattee, Arpiucki, negro Abram, and the Dwarf were present. Surely these stayed not to sign?

I looked for Oçeola. It was not difficult to discover one so conspicuous, both in figure and feature. He formed the last link in the now contracted curve of the chiefs. He was lowest in rank, but this did not signify, as regarded his position. Perhaps he had placed himself there from a feeling of modesty—a well-known characteristic of the man. He was in truth the very youngest of the chiefs, and by birthright entitled to a smaller command than any present; but viewing him as he stood, even at the bottom of the rank, one could not help fancying that he was the head of all.

As upon the preceding day, there was no

appearance of bravado about him. His attitude, though stately and statuesque, was one of perfect ease. His arms were folded over his full chest; his weight resting on one limb, the other slightly retired; his features in repose, or now and then lit up by an expression rather of gentleness. He seemed the impersonation of an Apollo; or, to speak less mythologically, a well-behaved gentleman waiting for some ceremony, of which he was to be a simple spectator. As yet, nothing had transpired to excite him; no words had been uttered to rouse a spirit that only *seemed* to slumber.

Ere long, that attitude of repose would pass away—that soft smile would change to the harsh frown of passion.

Gazing upon his face, one could hardly fancy such a transformation possible, and yet a close observer might. It was like the placid sky that precedes the storm—the calm ocean that in a moment may

be convulsed by the squall—the couchant lion that on the slightest provocation may be roused to ungovernable rage.

During the moments that preceded the nauguration of the council, I kept my eyes upon the young chief. Other eyes were regarding him as well; he was the cynosure of many; but mine was a gaze of peculiar interest.

I looked for some token of recognition, but received none—neither nod nor glance. Once or twice his eye fell upon me, but passed to some one else, as though I was but one among the crowd of his pale-faced adversaries. He appeared not to remember me. Was this really so? or was it that his mind, pre-oçcupied with great thoughts, hindered him from taking notice?

I did not fail to cast my eyes abroad —over the plain—to the tents—towards the groups of loitering women. I scanned their forms, one after another.

I fancied I saw the mad queen in their midst—a centre of interest. I had hopes that her *protégée* might be near; but no. None of the figures satisfied my eye: they were all too *squaw-like* —too short or too tall—too corpulent or too *maigre*. She was not there. Even under the loose *hunna* I should have recognised her splendid form—*if still unchanged.*

If—the hypothesis excites your surprise. Why changed, you ask? Growth?—development?—maturity? Rapid in this southern clime is the passage from maiden's form to that of matron.

No; not that, not that. Though still so young, the undulating outlines had already shewn themselves. When I last looked upon her, her stature had reached its limits; her form exhibited the bold curve of Hogarth, so characteristic of womanhood complete. Not that did I fear.

And what then? The contrary? Change from attenuation—from illness or grief? Nor this.

I cannot explain the suspicions that racked me—sprung from a stray speech. That jay bird, that yestreen chattered so gaily, had poured poison into my heart. But, no; it could not be Maümee? She was too innocent. Ah! why do I rave? There is no guilt in love. If true—if she—hers was not a crime; he alone was the guilty one.

I have ill described the torture I experienced, consequent upon my unlucky "eaves-dropping." During the whole of the preceding day, it had been a source of real suffering. I was in the predicament of one who had heard too much, and too little.

You will scarcely wonder that the words of Haj-Ewa cheered me; they drove the unworthy suspicion out of my mind, and inspired me with fresh hopes. True,

she had mentioned no name till I myself had pronounced it; but to whom could her speech refer? "Poor bird of the forest—her heart will bleed and break." She spoke of the "Rising Sun;" that was Oçeola. Who could the "haintclitz" be? Who but Maümee?

It might be but a tale of by-gone days—a glimpse of the past deeply impressed upon the brain of the maniac, and still living in her memory. This was possible. Haj-Ewa had known us in those days, had often met us in our wild wood rambles, had even been with us upon the island—for the mad queen could paddle her canoe with skill, could ride her wild steed, could go anywhere, went everywhere.

It might be only a souvenir of these happy days that caused her to speak as she had done—in the chaos of her intellect, mistaking the past for the present. Heaven forbid!

The thought troubled me, but not long; for I did not long entertain it. I clung to the pleasanter belief. Her words were sweet as honey, and formed a pleasing counterpoise to the fear I might otherwise have felt, on discovering the plot against my life. With the knowledge that Maümee had once loved—still loved me—I could have dared dangers a hundredfold greater than that. It is but a weak heart that would not be gallant under the influence of love. Encouraged by the smiles of a beautiful mistress, even cowards can be brave.

Arens Ringgold was standing by my side. Entrained in the crowd, our garments touched; we conversed together!

He was even more polite to me than was his wont—more *friendly!* His speech scarcely betrayed the habitual cynicism of his nature; though, whenever I looked him in the face, his eye quailed, and his glance sought the ground.

For all that, he had no suspicion—not the slightest—that I knew I was side by side with the man who designed to murder me.

CHAPTER VIII.

CASHIERING THE CHIEFS.

To-DAY the commissioner shewed a bolder front. A bold part he had resolved to play, but he felt sure of success; and consequently there was an air of triumph in his looks. He regarded the chiefs with the imperious glance of one determined to command them; confident they would yield obedience to his wishes.

At intervals his eye rested upon Oçeola with a look of peculiar significance, at once sinister and triumphant. I was in the secret of that glance; I guessed its import;

I knew that it boded no good to the young Seminole chief. Could I have approached him at that moment, I should have held duty but lightly, and whispered in his ear a word of warning.

I was angry with myself that I had not thought of this before. Haj-Ewa could have borne a message on the previous night. Why did I not send it? My mind had been too full. Occupied with my own perils, I had not thought of the danger that threatened my friend—for in this light I still regarded Powell.

I had no exact knowledge of what was meant; though, from the conversation I had overheard, I more than half divined the commissioner's purpose. Under some plea, *Oçeola was to be arrested.*

A plea was needed; the outrage could not be perpetrated without one. Even the reckless agent might not venture upon such a stretch of power without plausible

pretext; and how was this pretext to be obtained?

The withdrawal of Onopa and the "hostiles," while Omatla with the "friendlies" remained, had given the agent the opportunity. *Oçeola himself was to furnish the plea.*

Would that I could have whispered in his ear one word of caution!

It was too late; the toils had been laid, the trap set; and the noble game was about to enter it. It was too late for me to warn him. I must stand idly by, spectator to an act of injustice, a gross violation of right.

A table was placed in front of the ground occupied by the general and staff; the commissioner stood immediately behind it. Upon this table was an ink-stand with pens; while a broad parchment, exhibiting the creases of many folds, was spread out till it occupied nearly the whole surface. This parchment was the treaty of the Oclawaha.

"Yesterday," began the commissioner, without further preamble, "we did nothing but talk—to-day we are met to act. This," said he, pointing to the parchment, "is the treaty of Payne's Landing. I hope you have all considered what I said yesterday, and are ready to sign it?"

"We have considered," replied Omatla for himself and those of his party. "We are ready to sign."

"Onopa is head-chief," suggested the commissioner; "let him sign first. Where is Miconopa?" he added, looking around the circle with feigned surprise.

"The mico-mico is not here."

"And why not here? He should have been here. Why is he absent?"

"He is sick—he is not able to attend the council."

"That is a *lie*, Jumper. Miconopa is shamming; you know he is."

The dark brow of Hoitle-mattee grew

darker at the insult, while his body quivered with rage. A grunt of disdain was all the reply he made, and folding his arms, he drew back into his former attitude.

"Abram! you are Miconopa's private counsellor; you know his intentions. Why has he absented himself?"

"O Massr Ginral!" replied the black in broken English, and speaking without much show of respect for his interrogator, "how shed ole Abe know the 'tention ob King Nopy? The mico no tell me ebberting—he go he please, he come he please—he great chief; he no tell nobody his 'tention."

"Does he intend to sign? Say yes or no."

"No, den!" responded the interpreter in a firm voice, as if forced to the answer. "That much ob his mind Abe *do* know. He no 'tend sign that ar dockament. He say no, no."

"Enough!" cried the commissioner in a

loud voice—"enough! Now hear me, chiefs and warriors of the Seminole nation! I appear before you armed with a power from your Great Father the President—he who is chief of us all. That power enables me to punish for disloyalty and disobedience; and I now exercise the right upon Miconopa. *He is no longer king of the Seminoles!*"

This unexpected announcement produced an effect upon the audience similar to that of an electric shock. It startled the chiefs and warriors into new attitudes, and all stood looking eagerly at the speaker. But the expression upon their faces was not of like import—it varied much. Some shewed signs of anger as well as surprise. A few appeared pleased, while the majority evidently received the announcement with incredulity.

Surely the commissioner was jesting? How could *he* make or unmake a king of the Seminoles? How could the Great Father himself do this? The Seminoles were a free nation;

they were not even tributary to the whites—under no political connection whatever. They themselves could alone elect their king—they only could depose him. Surely the commissioner was jesting!

Not at all. In another moment, they perceived he was in earnest. Foolish as was the project of deposing King Onopa, he entertained it seriously. He had resolved to carry it into execution; and as far as decrees went, he did so without further delay.

"Omatla! you have been faithful to your word and your honour; you are worthy to head a brave nation. From this time forth, *you* are king of the Seminoles. Our Great Father, and the people of the United States, hail you as such; they will acknowledge no other. Now, let the signing proceed."

At a gesture from the commissioner, Omatla stepped forward to the table, and

taking the pen in his hand, wrote his name upon the parchment.

The act was done in perfect silence. But one voice broke the deep stillness—one word only was heard, uttered with angry aspirate, it was the word "traitor!"

I looked round to discover who had pronounced it; the hiss was still quivering upon the lips of Oçeola; while his eye was fixed on Omatla with a glance of ineffable scorn.

"Black Crazy Clay" next took the pen, and affixed his signature, which was done by simply making his "mark."

After him followed Ohala, Itolasse Omatla, and about a dozen—all of whom were known as the chiefs that favoured the scheme of removal.

The hostile chiefs—whether by accident or design I know not—stood together, forming the left wing of the semicircle. It was now their turn to declare themselves.

Hoitle-mattee was the first about whose

signing the commissioner entertained any doubt. There was a pause, significant of apprehension.

"It is your turn, Jumper," said the latter at length, addressing the chief by his English name.

"You may *jump* me then," replied the eloquent and witty chief, making a jest of what he meant for earnest as well.

"How? you refuse to sign?"

"Hoitle-mattee does not write."

"It is not necessary; your name is already written; you have only to place your finger upon it."

"I might put my finger on the wrong place."

"You can sign by making a cross," continued the agent, still in hopes that the chief would consent.

"We Seminoles have but little liking for the cross; we had enough of it in the days of the Spaniards. *Hulwak!*"

"Then you positively refuse to sign?"

"Ho! Mr. Commissioner, does it surprise you?"

"Be it so, then. Now hear what I have to say to you."

"Hoitle-mattee's ears are as open as the commissioner's mouth," was the sneering rejoinder.

"I depose Hoitle-mattee from the chieftainship of his clan. The Great Father will no longer recognise him as a chief of the Seminoles."

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the scornful laugh in reply. "Indeed — indeed! And tell me," he asked, still continuing to laugh, and treating with derision the solemn enunciation of the commissioner, "of whom am I to be chief, General Thompson?"

"I have pronounced," said the agent, evidently confused and nettled by the ironical manner of the Indian; "you are no more a chief—we will not acknowledge you as one."

"But my people?—what of them?" asked the other in a fine tone of irony; "have they nothing to say in this matter?"

"Your people will act with reason. They will listen to their Great Father's advice. They will no longer obey a leader who has acted without faith."

"You say truly, agent," replied the chief, now speaking seriously. "My people will act with reason, but they will also act with patriotism and fidelity. Do not flatter yourself of the potency of our Great Father's advice. If it be given as a father's counsel, they will listen to it; if not, they will shut their ears against it. As to your disposal of myself, I only laugh at the absurdity of the act. I treat both act and agent with scorn. I have no dread of your power. I have no fear for the loyalty of my people. Sow dissension among them as you please; you have been successful elsewhere in making traitors"

—here the speaker glared towards Omatla and his warriors—"but I disregard your machinations. There is not a man in my tribe that will turn his back upon Hoitle-mattee—not one."

The orator ceased speaking, and folding his arms, fell back into an attitude of silent defiance. He saw that the commissioner had done with him, for the latter was now appealing to Abram for his signature.

The black's first answer was a decided negative—simply "No." When urged to repeat his refusal, he added:—

"No—by Jovah! I nebber sign de d—paper—nebber. Dat's enuf—ain't it, Bossy Thompson?"

Of course this put an end to the appeal, and Abram was "scratched" from the list of chiefs.

Arpiucki followed next, and "Cloud" and the "Alligator," and then the dwarf Poshalla. All these refused their signatures,

and were in turn formally deposed from their dignities. So, likewise, were Holata Mico and others who were absent.

Most of the chiefs only laughed as they listened to the wholesale cashiering. It was ludicrous enough to hear this puny office-holder of an hour pronounce edicts with all the easy freedom of an emperor! *

Poshalla, the last who had been disgraced, laughed like the others; but the dwarf had a bitter tongue, and could not refrain from a rejoinder.

"Tell the fat agent," cried he to the interpreter — "tell him that I shall be a chief of the Seminoles when the rank weeds are growing over his great carcass — ha, ha!"

The rough speech was not carried to the

* The United States government afterwards disapproved of this abrupt dethronement of the chiefs; but there is no doubt that Thompson acted under secret instructions from the President.

ears of the commissioner. He did not even hear the scornful cachinnation that followed it, for his attention was now entirely occupied with one individual—the youngest of the chiefs—the last in the line—Oçeola.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIGNATURE OF OÇEOLA.

Up to this moment the young chief had scarcely spoken; only when Charles Omatla took hold of the pen, he had hissed out the word traitor.

He had not remained all the time in the same attitude, neither had his countenance shown him indifferent to what was passing. There was no constraint either in his gestures or looks—no air of affected stoicism—for this was not his character. He had laughed at the wit of Jumper, and applauded the patriotism of

Abram and the others, as heartily as he had frowned disapproval of the conduct of the traitors.

It was now his turn to declare himself, and he stood, with modest mien, in the expectation of being asked. All the others had been appealed to by name — for the names of all were well known to the agent and his interpreters.

I need hardly state that at this crisis silence was on tiptoe. Throughout the ranks of the soldiery—throughout the crowd of warriors—everywhere—there was a moment of breathless expectancy, as if every individual upon the ground was imbued with the presentiment of a scene.

For my part, I felt satisfied that an explosion was about to take place; and, like the rest, I stood spell-bound with expectation.

The commissioner broke silence with the words:—

"At last we come to you, *Powell.* Before proceeding further, let me ask — Are you acknowledged as a *chief?*"

There was insult in the tone, the manner, the words. It was direct and intended, as the countenance of the speaker clearly showed. There was malice in his eye—malice mingled with the confidence of prospective triumph.

The interrogation was irrelevant, superfluous. Thompson knew well that Powell was a chief — a sub-chief, it is true, but still a chief—a war-chief of the Redsticks, the most warlike tribe of the nation. The question was put for mere provocation. The agent tempted an outburst of that temper that all knew to be none of the gentlest.

Strange to say, the insult failed in its effect, or it seemed so. They who expected an angry answer were doomed to disappointment. Oçeola made no reply.

Only a peculiar smile was observed upon his features. It was not of anger, nor yet of scorn: it was rather a smile of silent, lordly contempt—the look which a gentleman would bestow upon the blackguard who is abusing him. Those who witnessed it were left under the impression that the young chief regarded his insulter as beneath the dignity of a reply, and the insult too gross, as it really was, to be answered. Such impression had I, in common with others around me.

Oçeola's look might have silenced the commissioner, or, at least, have caused him to change his tactics, had he been at all sensitive to derision. But no—the vulgar soul of the plebeian official was closed against shame, as against justice; and without regarding the repulse, he pressed on with his plan.

"I ask, are you a chief?" continued he, repeating the interrogatory in a still

more insulting tone. "Have you the right to sign?"

This time his questions were answered, and by a dozen voices at once. Chieftains in the ring, and warriors who stood behind it, shouted in reply:—

"The Rising Sun? — a chief! He *is* a chief. He has the right to sign."

"Why call his right in question?" inquired Jumper, with a sneering laugh. "Time enough when he wishes to exercise it. He is not likely to do that now."

"But I *am*," said Oçeola, addressing himself to the orator, and speaking with marked emphasis. "I have the right to sign—*I shall sign.*"

It is difficult to describe the effect produced by this unexpected avowal. The entire audience—white men as well as red men—was taken by surprise; and for some moments there was a vibratory movement throughout the assembly, accompanied by a

confused murmur of voices. Exclamations were heard on all sides — cries of varied import, according to the political bias of those who uttered them. All, however, betokened astonishment; with some, in tones of joy; with others, in the accents of chagrin or anger. Was it Oçeola who had spoken? Had they heard aright? Was the "Rising Sun" so soon to sink behind the clouds? After all that had transpired—after all he had promised—was *he* going to turn traitor?

Such questions passed rapidly among the hostile chiefs and warriors; while those of the opposite party could scarcely conceal their delight. All knew that the signing of Oçeola would end the affair; and the removal become a matter of course. The Omatlas would have nothing more to fear; the hostile warriors, who had sworn it, might still resist; but there was no leader among them who could bind the patriots

together as Oçeola had done. With his defection, the spirit of resistance would become a feeble thing: the patriots might despair.

Jumper, Cloud, Coa Hajo, and Abram, Arpiucki, and the dwarf, seemed all equally stricken with astonishment. Oçeola—he on whom they had reposed their fullest confidence—the bold designer of the opposition—the open foe to all who had hitherto advocated the removal—he, the pure patriot in whom all had believed—whom all had trusted, was now going to desert them—now, in the eleventh hour, when his defection would be fatal to their cause.

"He has been bribed," said they. "His patriotism has been all a sham; his resistance a cheat. He has been bought by the agent; he has been acting for him all along. *Holywaugus! Iste-hulwa-stchay.** 'Tis a treason blacker than Omatla's!"

* Bad man—villain.

Thus muttered the chiefs to one another, at the same time eyeing Oçeola with the fierce look of tigers.

With regard to Powell's defection, I did not myself know what to make of it. He had declared his resolution to sign the treaty; what more was needed? That he was ready to do so was evident from his attitude: he seemed only to wait for the agent to invite him.

As to the commissioner being a party to this intention, I knew he was nothing of the kind. Any one who looked in his face, at that moment, would have acquitted him of all privity to the act. He was evidently as much astonished by Oçeola's declaration as anyone upon the ground, or even more so; in fact, he seemed bewildered by the unexpected avowal; so much, that it was some time before he could make rejoinder.

He at length stammered out:

"Very well, Oçeola! Step forward here, and sign then."

Thompson's tone was changed: he spoke soothingly. A new prospect was before him. Oçeola would sign, and thus agree to the removal. The business upon which the supreme government had deputed him would thus be accomplished, and with a dexterity that would redound to his own credit. "Old Hickory" would be satisfied; and then what next? what next? Not a mission to a mere tribe of savages, but an embassy to some high court of civilisation. He might yet be ambassador? perhaps to Spain?

Ah! Wiley Thompson! thy castles in the air (*châteaux en Espagne*) were soon dissipated. They fell suddenly as they had been built: they broke down like a house of cards.

Oçeola stepped forward to the table, and bent over it, as if to scan the words of the document. His eyes ran rapidly across the parchment; he seemed to be searching for some particular place.

He found it—it was a name—he read it aloud. "Charles Omatla."

Raising himself erect, he faced the commissioner; and, in a tone of irony, asked the latter if he still desired him to sign.

"You have promised, Oçeola."

"Then will I keep my promise."

As he spoke the words, he drew his long Spanish knife from its sheath, and raising it aloft, struck the blade through the parchment till its point was deep buried in the wood.

"That is my signature!" cried he, as he drew forth the steel. "See! Omatla! it is through *your* name. Beware, traitor! Undo what you have done, or its blade may yet pass through your heart!"

"Oh! that is what he meant," cried the commissioner, rising in rage. "Good. I was prepared for this insolence—this outrage. General Clinch!—I appeal to you—your soldiers—seize upon—arrest him!"

These broken speeches I heard amidst the confusion of voices. I heard Clinch issue some hurried orders to an officer who stood near. I saw half a dozen files separate from the ranks, and rush forward; I saw them cluster around Oçeola—who the next moment was in their grasp.

Not till several of the blue-coated soldiers were sent sprawling over the ground; not till guns had been thrown aside, and a dozen strong men had fixed their gripe upon him, did the young chief give over his desperate struggles to escape; and then apparently yielding, he stood rigid and immobile, as if his frame had been iron.

It was an unexpected *dénouement*—alike unlooked for by either white men or Indians. It was a violent proceeding, and altogether unjustifiable. This was no court whose judge had the right to arrest for contempt. It was a council, and even the insolence of an individual could not be punished without the

concurrence of both parties. General Thompson had exceeded his düty—he had exercised a power arbitrary as illegal.

The scene that followed was so confused as to defy description. The air was rent with loud ejaculations; the shouts of men, the screams of women, the cries of children, the yells of the Indian warriors, fell simultaneously upon the ear. There was no attempt at rescue—that would have been impossible in the presence of so many troops —so many traitors; but the patriot chiefs, as they hurried away from the ground, gave out their wild "Yo-ho-ehee"—the gathering war-word of the Seminole nation—that in every utterance promised retaliation and revenge.

The soldiers commenced dragging Oçeola inside the fort.

"Tyrant!" cried he, fixing his eye upon the commissioner, "you have triumphed by treachery; but fancy not that this is the

end of it. You may imprison Oçeola—hang him, if you will—but think not that his spirit will die. No; it will live, and cry aloud for vengeance. It speaks! Hear ye yonder sounds? Know ye the "war-cry" of the Redsticks? Mark it well; for it is not the last time it will ring in your ears. *Ho—yo-ho-ehee! yo-ho-ehee!* Listen to it, tyrant! it is your death-knell—it is your death-knell!"

While giving utterance to these wild threats, the young chief was drawn through the gate, and hurried off to the guard-house within the stockade.

As I followed amid the crowd, some one touched me on the arm, as if to draw my attention. Turning, I beheld Haj-Ewa.

"To-night, by the *we-wa*,"* said she, speaking so as not to be heard by those around. "There will be shadows — more shadows upon the water. Perhaps—"

* Spring, pond, or water.

I did not hear more: the crowd pressed us apart; and when I looked again, the mad queen had moved away from the spot.

CHAPTER X.

"FIGHTING GALLAGHER."

THE prisoner was confined in a strong, windowless block-house. Access to him would be easy enough, especially to those who wore epaulettes. It was my design to visit him; but, for certain reasons, I forbore putting it into execution, so long as daylight lasted. I was desirous that my interview should be as private as possible, and therefore waited for the night.

I was influenced by other reasons; my hands were full of business; I

had not yet done with Arens Ringgold.

I had a difficulty in deciding how to act. My mind was a chaos of emotions: hatred for the conspirators—indignation at the unjust behaviour of the agent towards Oçeola—love for Maümee —now fond and trusting—anon doubting and jealous. Amid such confusion, how could I think with clearness?

Withal, one of these emotions had precedence—anger against the villain who intended to take my life was at that moment the strongest passion in my breast.

Hostility so heartless, so causeless, so deadly, had not failed to imbue me with a keen desire for vengeance; and I resolved to punish my enemy at all hazards.

He only, whose life has been aimed at by an assassin, can understand the deadly antipathy I felt towards Arens Ringgold. An open enemy who acts under the impulse

of anger, jealousy, or fancied wrong, you may respect. Even the two white wretches, and the yellow runaway, I regarded only with contempt, as tools pliant for any purpose; but the arch-conspirator himself I now both hated and despised. So acute was my sense of injury, that I could not permit it to pass without some act of retaliation, some effort to punish my wronger.

But how? Therein lay the uncertainty. How? A duel?

I could think of no other way. The criminal was still inside the law. I could not reach him otherwise than by my own arm.

I well weighed the words of my sable counsellor; but the faithful fellow had spoken in vain, and I resolved to act contrary to his advice, let the hazard fall as it might. I made up my mind to the challenge.

One consideration still caused me to

hesitate: *I must give Ringgold my reasons.*

He should have been welcome to them as a dying souvenir; but if I succeeded in only *half killing* him, or he in half killing me, how about the future? I should be showing my hand to him, by which he would profit; whereas, unknown to him, I now knew his, and might easily foil his designs.

Such calculations ran rapidly through my mind, though I considered them with a coolness that in after-thought surprises me. The incidents I had lately encountered—combined with angry hatred of this plausible villain—made me fierce, cold, and cruel. I was no longer myself; and wicked as it may appear, I could not control my longings for vengeance.

I needed a friend to advise me. Who could I make the confidant of my terrible secret?

Surely my ears were not deceiving me?

No; it was the voice of my old school-fellow, Charley Gallagher. I heard it outside, and recognised the ring of his merry laugh. A detachment of rifles had just entered the fort, with Charley at their head. In another instant we had "embraced."

What could have been more opportune? Charley had been my "chum" at college—my bosom-companion. He deserved my confidence, and almost upon the instant, I made known to him the situation of affairs.

It required much explanation to remove his incredulity: he was disposed to treat the whole thing as a joke—that is, the conspiracy against my life. But the rifle-shot was real, and Black Jake was by to confirm my account of it; so that my friend was at length induced to take a serious view of the matter.

"Bad luck to me!" said he, in Irish accent: "it's the quarest case that iver came accrast your humble frind's exparience.

Mother o' Moses! the fellow must be the divil incarnate. Geordie, my boy, have ye looked under his instip?"

Despite the name and "brogue," Charley was not a Hibernian—only the son of one. He was a New-Yorker by birth, and could speak good English when he pleased; but from some freak of eccentricity or affectation, he had taken to the brogue, and used it habitually, when among friends, with all the rich garniture of a true Milesian, fresh from the "sod."

He was altogether an odd fellow, but with a soul of honour, and a heart true as steel. He was no dunce either, and the man, above all others, upon whose coat-tail it would not have been safe to "trid." He was already notorious for having been engaged in two or three "affairs," in which he had played both principal and second, and had earned the bellicose appellation of "Fighting Gallagher." I knew what *his* advice would be before

asking it—"Call the schoundrel out by all manes."

I stated the difficulty as to my reasons for challenging Ringgold.

"Thrue, *ma bohill!* You're right there; but there need be no throuble about the matther."

"How?"

"Make the spalpeen challenge you. That's betther—besides, it gives you the choice of waypons."

"In what way can I do this?"

"Och! my innocent gossoon! Shure that's as asy as tumblin' from a haycock. Call him a liar; an' if that's not sufficiently disagreeable, twake his nose, or squirt your tobacco in his ugly countenance. That'll fetch him out, I'll be bail for ye.

"Come along, my boy!" continued my ready counsellor, moving towards the door. "Where is this Mister Ringgowld to be sarched for? Find me the gint, and I'll

shew you how to scratch his buttons. Come along wid ye!"

Not much liking the plan of procedure, but without the moral strength to resist, I followed this impetuous son of a Celt through the doorway.

CHAPTER XI.

PROVOKING A DUEL.

We were scarcely outside before we saw him for whom we were searching. He was standing at a short distance from the porch, conversing with a group of officers, among whom was the dandy already alluded to, and who passed under the appropriate appellation of "Beau Scott." The latter was aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-chief, of whom he was also a relative.

I pointed Ringgold out to my companion.

"He in the civilian dress," I said.

"Och! man, ye needn't be so purticular in your idintification: that sarpint-look spakes for itself. Be my sowl! it's an unwholesome look altogither. That fellow needn't fear wather—the say'll niver drown *him*. Now, look here, Geordy, boy," continued Gallagher, facing towards me, and speaking in a more earnest tone; "follow my advice to the letther! First trid upon his toes, an' see how he takes it. The fellow's got corns: don't ye see, he wares a tight boot? Give him a good scrouge; make him sing out. Ov coorse, he'll ask you to apologise—he must—you won't. Shurely that'll do the bizness without further caremony? If it don't, then, by Jabus! hit him a kick in the latter end."

"No, Gallagher," said I, disliking the programme. "It will never do."

"Bad luck to it, an' why not? You're not goin' to back out, are ye? Think, man! a villain who would murdher you!

an' maybe will some day, if you let him escape."

"True—but—"

"Bah! no buts. Move up, an' let's see what they're talking about, anyhow. I'll find you a chance, or my name's not Gallagher."

Undetermined how to act, I walked after my companion, and joined the group of officers.

Of course, I had no thought of following Gallagher's advice. I was in hopes that some turn in the conversation might give me the opportunity I desired, without proceeding to such rude extremes.

My hopes did not deceive me. Arens Ringgold seemed to tempt his fate, for I had scarcely entered among the crowd, before I found cause sufficient for my purpose.

"Talking of Indian beauties," said he, "no one has been so successful among

them as Scott here. He has been playing Don Giovanni ever since he came to the fort."

"Oh!" exclaimed one of the newly-arrived officers, "that does not surprise us. He has been a lady-killer ever since I knew him. The man who is irresistible among the belles of Saratoga will surely find little difficulty in carrying the heart of an Indian maiden."

"Don't be so confident about that, Captain Roberts. Sometimes these forest damsels are very shy of us pale-faced lovers. Lieutenant Scott's present sweetheart cost him a long siege before he could conquer her. Is it not so, lieutenant?"

"Nonsense," replied the dandy, with a conceited smirk.

"But she yielded at last?" said Roberts, turning interrogatively towards Scott.

The dandy made no reply, but his simpering smile was evidently intended to be taken in the affirmative.

"O yes," rejoined Ringgold, "she yielded at last; and is now the 'favourite,' it is said."

"Her name, her name?"

"Powell—Miss Powell."

"What! That name is not Indian?"

"No, gentlemen; the lady is no savage, I assure you: she can play and sing, and read and write too—such pretty *billets-doux*. Is it not so, lieutenant?"

Before the latter could make reply, another spoke:

"Is not that the name of the young chief who has just been arrested?"

"True," answered Ringgold; "it is the fellow's name. I had forgotten to say she is his sister."

"What! the sister of Oçeola?"

"Neither more nor less—half-blood like him too. Among the whites they are known by the name of Powell, since that was the cognomen of the worthy old

gentleman who begot them. Oçeola, which signifies 'the Rising Sun,' is the name by which he is known among the Seminoles; and *her* native appellation—ah, that is a very pretty name, indeed."

"What is it? Let us hear it; let us judge for ourselves."

"Maümee."

"Very pretty indeed!"

"Beautiful! If the damsel be only as sweet as her name, then Scott is a fortunate fellow."

"Oh, she is a very wonder of beauty; eyes liquid and full of fiery love—long lashes; lips luscious as honeycombs; figure tall; bust full and firm; limbs like those of the Cyprian goddess; feet like Cinderella's—in short, perfection."

"Wonderful! Why, Scott, you are the luckiest mortal alive. But say, Ringgold! are you speaking in seriousness? Has he really conquered this Indian divinity?

Honour bright—*has he succeeded?* You understand what I mean?"

"*Most certainly,*" was the prompt reply.

Up to this moment, I had not interfered. The first words of the conversation had bound me like a spell, and I stood as if glued to the ground. My brain was giddy, and my heart felt as if the blood passing through it was molten lead. The bold enunciations had so staggered me, that it was some time before I could draw my breath, and more than one of the bystanders noticed the effect which the dialogue was producing upon me.

After a little, I grew calmer, or rather more resolute. The very despair that had passed into my bosom had the effect of steeling my nerves; and just as Ringgold uttered the flippant affirmative, I was ready for him.

"Liar!" I exclaimed; and before the

red could mount into his cheek, I gave it a slap with the back of my hand, that no doubt helped to heighten the colour.

"Nately done," cried Gallagher; "there can be no mistake about the maynin' of that."

Nor was there. My antagonist accepted the act for what it was meant—a deadly insult. In such company, he could not do otherwise; and muttering some indistinct threats, he walked away from the ground, attended by his especial friend, the lady-killer, and two or three others.

The incident, instead of gathering a crowd, had the contrary effect: it scattered the little group who had witnessed it; the officers retiring indoors to discuss the motives, and speculate as to when and where "the affair would come off."

Gallagher and I also left the ground; and, closeted in my quarters, commenced preparing for the event.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHALLENGE.

At the time of which I write, duelling was not uncommon in the United States army. In *war-time*, it is not uncommon yet, as I can testify from late experience. It is contrary to the regulations of the American service—as I believe it is of every other in the civilised world. Notwithstanding, an infringement of the *code militaire* in this regard is usually looked upon with leniency —more often "winked at" than punished. This much I can affirm—that any officer in the American army who has received the

"lie direct" will find more honour in the breach of this military rule than in its observance.

After all that has been said and written about duelling, the outcry against it is a sad sham, at least in the United States of America—nothing less than a piece of superb hypocrisy. Universal as has been this condemnation, I should not like to take shelter under it. I well know it would not protect me from being called by that ugly appellation, "poltroon." I have noticed over and over again, that the newspapers loudest in their declamations against duelling are the first to fling "coward" in the teeth of him who refuses to fight.

It is even so. In America, moral courage, though much bepraised, does not find ready credence. A refusal to meet the man who may challenge you is not thus explained. It is called "backing out," "shewing the white feather;" and he who

does this need look no more upon his lady-love; she would "flog him with her garters."

More than once have I heard this threat, spoken by pretty lips, and in the centre of a brilliant circle. His moral courage must be great who would provoke such a chastisement.

With such a sentiment over the land, then, I had nailed Arens Ringgold for a meeting; and I joyed to think I had done so without compromising my secret: and if he had been the greatest coward in the world, he could not have been more wretched than I, as I returned to my quarters.

My jovial companion could no longer cheer me, though it was not fear for the coming fight that clouded my spirits. Far from it—far otherwise. I scarcely thought of that. My thoughts were of Maümee, of what I had just heard. She was false—

false—betraying, herself betrayed—lost—lost for ever!

In truth was I wretched. One thing alone could have rendered me more so——an obstacle to the anticipated meeting—anything to hinder my revenge. On the duel now rested my hopes. It might enable me to disembarrass my heart of the hot blood that was burning in it. Not all, unless he too stood before me—he, the seducer, who had made this misery. Would I could find pretext for challenging him! I should do so yet. Why had I not? Why did I not strike him for that smile? I could have fought them both at the same time, one after the other.

Thus I raved, with Gallagher by my side. My friend knew not all my secret. He asked what I had got "aginst the aid-de-cong."

"Say the word, Geordy, boy, an' we'll make a four-handed game ov it. Be Saint

Pathrick! I'd like mightily to take the shine out of that purty pay-cock!"

"No, Gallagher, no. It's not your affair; you could not give *me* satisfaction for that. Let us wait till we know more. I cannot believe it—I cannot believe it."

"Believe what?"

"Not now, my friend. When it is over, I shall explain."

"All right, my boy. Charley Gallagher's not the man to disturb your saycrets. Now, let's look to the bull-dogs, an' make shure they're in barking condition. I hope the scamps won't blab at head-quarters, an' disappoint us after all."

It was my only fear. I knew that arrest was possible—probable—certain, if my adversary wished it. Arrest would put an end to the affair; and I should be left in a worse position than ever. Ringgold's father was gone—I had ascertained this favourable circumstance; but no matter.

The Commander-in-chief was the friend of the family—a word in his ear would be sufficient. I feared the aide-de-camp, Scott, instructed by Arens, might whisper that word.

"After all, he daren't," said Gallagher; "you driv the nail home, an' clinched it. He daren't do the dirty thing—not a bit ov it; it might get wind, an' thin he'd have the kettle to his tail; besides, *ma bohill*, he wants to kill you anyhow; so he ought to be glad of the fine handy chance you've given him. He's not a bad shot, they say. Never fear, Geordie, boy; he won't back out this time: he must fight—he will fight. Ha! I told you so. See, yonder comes Apollo Belvidare! Holy Moses! how Phœbus shines!"

A knock—"Come in"—the door was opened, and the aid-de-camp appeared in full uniform.

"To arrest me," thought I; and my heart fell.

But no; the freshly-written note spoke a different purpose, and I was relieved. It was the challenge.

"Lieutenant Randolph, I believe?" said the gentleman, advancing towards me.

I pointed to Gallagher, but made no reply.

"I am to understand that Captain Gallagher is your friend?"

I nodded assent.

The two faced each other, and the next instant were *en rapport;* talking the matter over, cool as cucumbers and sweet as sugar-plums.

From observation, I hazard this remark —that the politeness exhibited between the seconds in a duel cannot be surpassed by that of the most accomplished courtiers in the world.

The time occupied in the business was

brief. Gallagher well knew the routine, and I saw that the other was not unacquainted with it. In five minutes, everything was arranged—time, place, weapons, and distance.

I nodded; Gallagher made a sweeping salaam; the aid-de-camp bowed stiffly and withdrew.

* * * * * * *

I shall not trouble you with my reflections previous to the duel, nor yet with many details of the affair itself. Accounts of these deadly encounters are common enough in books, and their sameness will serve as my excuse for not describing one.

Ours differed only from the ordinary kind in the weapon used. We fought with *rifles*, instead of swords or pistols. It was my choice—as the challenged party, I had the right—but it was equally agreeable to my adversary, who was as well skilled in

the use of the rifle as I. I chose this weapon because it was the *deadliest.*

The time arranged was an hour before sunset. I had urged this early meeting in fear of interruption; the place, a spot of level ground near the edge of the little pond where I had met Haj-Ewa; the distance, ten paces.

We met—took our places, back to back — waited for the ominous signal, "One, two, three" — received it — faced rapidly round—and fired at each other.

I heard the "hist" of the leaden pellet as it passed my ear, but felt no stroke.

The smoke puffed upward. I saw my antagonist upon the ground; he was not dead: he was writhing and groaning.

The seconds, and several spectators who were present, ran up to him, but I kept my ground.

"Well, Gallagher?" I asked, as my friend came back to me.

"Winged, by japers! You've spoilt the use ov his dexter arm — bone broke above the ilbow-joint."

"That all?"

"Arrah, sowl! aren't it enough? Hear how the hound whimpers!"

I felt as the tiger is said to feel after tasting blood, though I cannot now account for my ferocity. The man had sought my life — I thirsted for his. This, combined with the other thought, had nigh driven me mad.

I was not satisfied, and would make no apology; but my antagonist had had enough; he was eager to be taken from the ground on any terms, and thus the affair ended.

It was my first duel, but not my last.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ASSIGNATION.

Our opponents passed silently away — the spectators along with them — leaving my second and myself upon the ground.

It was my intention to stay by the pond. I remembered the invitation of Haj-Ewa. By remaining, I should avoid the double journey. Better to await her coming.

A glance to the western horizon shewed me that the sun had already sunk below the tree-tops. The twilight would be short. The young moon was already in the heavens. It might be only a few

minutes before Haj-Ewa should come. I resolved to stay.

I desired not that Gallagher should be with me; and I expressed the wish to be left alone.

My companion was a little surprised and puzzled at the request; but he was too well bred not to yield instant compliance.

"Why, Geordie, boy!" said he, about to retire, "shurely there's something the matther wid ye? It isn't this thrifling spurt we've been engaged in? Didn't it ind intirely to your satisfaction? Arrah, man! are ye sorry ye didn't kill him dead? Be my trath, you look as milancholic an' downhearted as if he had killed *you!*"

"Dear friend, leave me alone. On my return to quarters, you shall know the cause of my melancholy, and why I now desire to part from your pleasant company."

"Oh, that part I can guess," rejoined he with a significant laugh: "always a petticoat where there's shots exchanged. Niver mind, my boy—no saycrets for Charley Gallagher: I'm bad at keepin' them. Ov coorse, you're going to meet betther company than mine; but laste you might fall in with worse—an', by my sowl! from what ye've towld me, that same isn't beyond the bounds of probability—take this little cheeper. I'm a great dog-braker, you know." Here the speaker handed me a silver-call which he had plucked from his button. "If anything inconvanient or disagreeable should turn up, put that between your lips, an' Charley Gallagher will be at your side in the mintion of Jack Robinson's name. Cupid spade ye with your lady-love! I'll go an' kill time over a tumbler of nagus till ye come?"

So saying, my warm-hearted friend left me to myself.

I ceased to think of him ere he was gone out of sight—even the bloody strife, in which I had been so recently engaged, glided out of my mind. Maümee—her falsehood and her fall—alone occupied my thoughts.

For a long while, I made no doubt of what I had heard. How could I, with proofs so circumstantial?—the testimony of those cognisant of the scandal—of the chief actor in it, whose silent smile spoke stronger than words. That smile of insolent triumph—why had I permitted it to pass without challenge, without rebuke? It was not too late—I should call upon him to speak plainly and point-blank—yes or no. If yes, then for a second duel, more deadly than the first.

Notwithstanding these resolves to make my rival declare himself, I doubted not the damning truth; I endeavoured to resign myself to its torture.

For a long while was my soul upon the rack—more than an hour. Then, as my blood

grew more cool, reflections of a calmer nature entered my mind; and at intervals, I experienced the soothing influences of hope; this especially, when I recalled the words of Haj-Ewa, spoken on the preceding night. Surely the maniac had not been mocking me? Surely it was not a dream of her delirious brain? a distorted *mirage* of memory—the memory of some far-away, long-forgotten scene, by her only remembered? No, no; her tale was not distorted — her thoughts were not delirious—her words were not mockeries!

How sweet it was to think so!

Yes—I began to experience intervals of placid thought; more than placid — pleasant.

Alas! they were evanescent. The memory of those bold meretricious phrases, those smiling inuendoes, dissipated or darkened them, as cumuli darken the sun. "He *had* succeeded;" "She was

now his favourite;" "Most certainly"—words worse than death. Withal it was a foul testimony on which to build a faith.

I longed for light, that true light—the evidence of the senses—that leaves nought uncertain. I should seek it with rash directness, reckless of the result, till it illumined her whole history, proving the past a disgrace, the future a chaos of utter despair. I longed for light; I longed for the coming of Haj-Ewa.

I knew not what the maniac wanted—something, I supposed, concerning the captive. Since noon, I had little thought of him. The mad queen went everywhere, knew everyone; she must know all, understand all—ay, well understand: she, too, had been betrayed.

I repaired to our place of meeting on the preceding night; there I might expect her. I crossed the little ridge among the

stems of the palmettoes; it was the direct route to the shadowy side of the tank. I descended the slope, and stood as before under the spreading arms of the live-oak.

Haj-Ewa was before me. A single moon-beam, slanting athwart the leaves, shone upon her majestic figure. Under its light, the two serpents glittered with a metallic lustre, as though her neck and waist were encircled with precious gems.

"*Hinklas!* pretty mico! you are come. Gallant mico! where was thine eye and thine arm that thou didst not kill the *Istehulwa?**

Ah! the hunter of the deer—
He was stricken so with fear
When he stood before the wolf,
The gaunt wicked wolf;
When he saw the snarling wolf,
He trembled so with fear,
That unharmed the fierce wolf ran away.

* Literally, bad man—villain.

Ha, ha, ha! was it not so, brave mico?"

"It was not fear that hindered me, Ewa. Besides, the wolf did not go unscathed."

"Ho! the wolf has a wounded leg—he will lick himself well again; he will soon be strong as ever. *Hulwak!* you should have killed him, fair mico, ere he bring the pack upon you."

"I could not help my ill-luck. I am unfortunate every way."

"*Cooree, cooree*—no. You should be happy, young mico; you *shall* be happy, friend of the red Seminole. Wait till you see—"

"See what?"

"Patience, *chepawnee!* To-night, under this very tree, you will see what is fair—you will have what is sweet—and perchance Haj-Ewa will be revenged."

This last phrase was spoken with an earnest emphasis, and in a tone that

shewed a strong feeling of resentment against some one unknown. I could not comprehend the nature of the expected vengeance.

"His son—yes," continued the maniac, now in soliloquy, "it must be—it must —his eyes, his hair, his form, his gait, his *name ; his* son and *hers.* Oh, Haj-Ewa will have revenge."

Was I myself the object of this menace ? Such a thought entered my mind.

"Good Ewa ! of whom are you speaking ?"

Roused by my voice, she looked upon me with a bewildered stare, and then broke out into her habitual chant :—

Why did I trust to a pale-faced lover ?
Ho, ho, ho ! &c.

Suddenly stopping, she seemed once more to remember herself, and essayed a reply to my question.

"Whom, young mico — of him, the fair one—the wicked one—the *Wykome hulwa.** See! he comes, he comes! Behold him in the water. Ho, ho! it is he. Up, young mico; up into thy leafy bower: stay till Ewa comes! Hear what you may hear — see what you may see; but, for your life, stir not till I give you the signal. Up, up, up!"

Just as on the preceding night, half lifting me into the live-oak, the maniac glided away amidst the shadows.

I lost no time in getting into my former position, where I sat silent and expecting.

The shadow had grown shorter, but there was still enough to show me that it was the form of a man. In another moment, it vanished.

Scarcely an instant had elapsed, ere a

* The spirit of evil.

second was flung upon the water, advancing over the ridge, and as if following the track of the former one, though the two persons did not appear to be in company.

That which followed I could trace in full outline. It was the figure of a woman, one whose upright bearing and free port proved her to be young.

Even the shadow exhibited a certain symmetry of form and gracefulness of motion, incompatible with age. Was it still Haj-Ewa? Had she gone round through the thicket, and was now following the footsteps of the man?

For a moment I fancied so; but I soon perceived that my fancy was astray.

The man advanced under the tree. The same moonbeam, that but the moment before had shone upon Haj-Ewa, now fell upon him, and I saw him with sufficient distinctness: he was the aid-de-camp.

He stopped, took out his watch, held

it up to the light, and appeared to be inquiring the hour.

But I heeded him no further. Another face appeared under that silvery ray—false and shining as itself: it was the face that to me seemed the loveliest in the world—the face of Maümee.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ECLAIRCISSEMENT.

THESE were the shadows upon the water promised by Haj-Ewa—black shadows upon my heart.

Mad queen of the Micosaucs! what have I done to deserve this torture? Thou, too, my enemy! Had I been thy deadliest foe, thou couldst scarcely have contrived a keener sting for thy vengeance.

Face to face stood Maümee and her lover — seduced and seducer. I had no doubt as to the identity of either. The moonbeam fell upon both—no longer with

soft silvery light, but gleaming rude and red, like the chandeliers of a bagnio. It may have been but a seeming — the reflection of an inflamed imagination that influenced me from within; but my belief in her innocence was gone — hopelessly gone; the very air seemed tainted with her guilt —the world appeared a chaos of debauchery and ruin.

I had no other thought than that I was present at a scene of assignation. How could I think otherwise? No signs of surprise were exhibited by either, as they came together. They met as those who have promised to come — who have often met before.

Evidently, each expected the other. Though other emotions declared themselves, there was not the slightest sign of novelty in the encounter.

For me, it was a terrible crisis. The anguish of a whole life compressed into the

space of a single moment could not have been more unendurable. The blood seemed to scald my heart as it gushed through. So acute was the pang, I could scarcely restrain myself from crying aloud.

An effort—a stern, determined effort—and the throe was over. Firmly bracing my nerves — firmly grasping the branches — I clung to my seat, resolved to know more.

That was a fortunate resolution. Had I at that moment given way to the wild impulse of passion, and sought a reckless revenge, I should in all likelihood have carved out for myself a long lifetime of sorrow. Patience proved my guardian angel, and the end was otherwise.

Not a word—not a motion—not a breath. What will they say?—what do?

My situation was like his of the suspended sword. On second thoughts, the simile is both trite and untrue: the sword had already fallen; it could wound me no more. I was

as one paralysed both in body and soul—impervious to further pain.

Not a word—not a motion—not a breath. What will they say?—what do?

The light is full upon Maüimee; I can see her from head to foot. How large she has grown; a woman in all her outlines, perfect, entire. And her loveliness has kept pace with her growth. Larger, she is lovelier than ever. Demon of jealousy! art thou not content with what thou hast already done? Have I not suffered enough? Why hast thou presented her in such witching guise? O that she were scarred, hideous, hag-like—as she shall yet become! Even thus to see her, would be some satisfaction—an anodyne to my chafed soul.

But it is not so. Her face is sweetly beautiful; never so beautiful before. Soft and innocent as ever—not a line of guilt can be traced on those placid features—not a gleam of evil in that round, rolling eye! The

angels of heaven are beautiful; but they are good. Oh, who could believe in crime concealed under such loveliness as hers?

I expected a more meretricious mien. There was a scintillation of cheer in the disappointment.

Do not suppose that these reflections occupied time. In a few seconds they passed through my mind, for thought is quicker than the magnetic shock. They passed while I was waiting to hear the first words that, to my surprise, were for some moments unspoken. To my surprise: *I* could not have met her in such fashion. My heart would have been upon my tongue, and my lips——

I see it now. The hot burst of passion is past—the spring-tide of love has subsided; such an interview is no longer a novelty; perhaps he grows tired of her, foul libertine that he is! See! they meet with some shyness. Coldness has arisen between them—a love quarrel—fool is he as villain—fool not to

rush into those arms, and at once reconcile it. Would that his opportunities were mine!—not all the world could restrain me from seeking that sweet embrace.

Bitter as were my thoughts, they were less bitter on observing this attitude of the lovers. I fancied it was half-hostile.

Not a word—not a motion—not a breath. What will they say?—what do?

My suspense came to an end. The aid-de-camp at length found his tongue.

"Lovely Maümee! you have kept your promise."

"But you, sir, have not yours? No—I read it in your looks. You have yet done nothing for us!"

"Be assured, Maümee, I have not had an opportunity. The general has been so busy, I have had no chance to press the matter upon him. But do not be impatient. I shall be certain to persuade him; and your property shall be restored to you in due time.

Tell your mother not to feel uneasy; for *your* sake, beautiful Maümee, I shall spare no exertion. Believe me, I am as anxious as yourself; but you must know the stern disposition of my uncle; and, moreover, that he is on the most friendly terms with the Ringgold family. In this will lie the main difficulty, but I fear not that I shall be able to surmount it."

"Oh, sir, your words are fine, but they have little worth with us now. We have waited long upon your promise to befriend us. We only wished for an investigation; and you might easily have attained it ere this. We no longer care for our lands, for greater wrongs make us forget the less. I should not have been here to-night, had we not been in sad grief at the misfortune—I should rather say outrage — that has fallen upon my poor brother. You have professed friendship to our family. I come to seek it now, for now may you

give proof of it. Obtain my brother's freedom, and we shall then believe in the fair words you have so often spoken. Do not say it is impossible; it cannot even be difficult for you who hold so much authority among the white chiefs. My brother may have been rude; but he has committed no crime that should entail severe punishment. A word to the great war-chief, and he would be set free. Go, then, and speak that word."

"Lovely Maüimee! you do not know the nature of the errand upon which you would send me. Your brother is a prisoner by orders of the agent, and by the act of the Commander-in-chief. It is not with us as among your people. I am only a subordinate in rank, and were I to offer the counsel you propose, I should be rebuked —perhaps punished."

"Oh, you fear rebuke for doing an act of justice?—to say nought of your much-

offered friendship? Good, sir! I have no more to say, except this—we believe you no longer. You need come to our humble cabin no more."

She was turning away with a scornful smile. How beautiful seemed that scorn!

"Stay, Maümee!—fair Maümee, do not part from me thus—doubt not that I will do all in my power—"

"Do what I have asked you. Set my brother free—let him return to his home."

"And if I should—"

"Well, sir."

"Know, Maümee, that for me to do so would be to risk everything. I might be degraded from my rank — reduced to the condition of a common soldier — disgraced in the eyes of my country — ay, punished, perhaps, by imprisonment worse than that which your brother is likely to endure. All this would I risk by the act."

The girl paused in her step, but made no reply.

"And yet all these chances shall I undergo — ay, the danger of death itself—if you, fair Maümee"—here the speaker waxed passionate and insinuating — "if you will only consent."

"Consent—to what, sir?"

"Lovely Maümee, need I tell you? Surely you understand my meaning? You cannot be blind to the love—to the passion — to the deep devotion with which your beauty has inspired me—"

"Consent to what, sir?" demanded she, repeating her former words, and in a soft tone, that seemed to promise compliance.

"Only to love me, fair Maümee—*to become my mistress.*"

For some moments, there was no reply. The grand woman seemed immobile as a statue. She did not even start on hear-

ing the foul proposal, but, on the contrary, stood as if turned to stone.

Her silence had an encouraging effect upon the ardent lover; he appeared to take it for assent. He could not have looked into her eye, or he would there have read an expression that would have hindered him from pressing his suit further. No — he could not have observed that glance, or he would hardly have made such a mistake.

"Only promise it, fair Maümee; your brother shall be free before the morning, and you shall have everything—"

"Villain, villain, villain! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

In all my life, I never heard aught so delightful as that laugh. It was the sweetest sound that ever fell upon my ears. Not all the wedding-bells that ever rang—not all the lutes that ever played—not all the harps and hautboys—the clarions and trumpets—in

the world, could have produced such melodious music for me.

The moon seemed to pour silver from the sky; the stars had grown bigger and brighter; the breeze became filled with delicious odours, as if a perfumed censer had been spilled from heaven, and the whole scene appeared suddenly transformed into an Elsiumy.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO DUELS IN ONE DAY.

THE crisis might have been my cue to come down; but I was overpowered with a sense of delightful happiness, and could not stir from my seat. The arrow had been drawn out of my breast, leaving not a taint of its poison; the blood coursed pleasantly through my veins; my pulse throbbed firm and free; my soul was triumphant. I could have cried out for very joy.

With an effort, I held my peace, and waited for the *dénouement*—for I saw that the scene was not yet at an end.

"Mistress, indeed!" exclaimed the bold beauty in scornful accent. "And this is the motive of your proffered friendship. Vile wretch! for what do you mistake me? a camp-wench, or a facile squaw of the Yemassee? Know, sir, that I am your equal in blood and race; and though your pale-faced friends have robbed me of my inheritance, there is that which neither they nor you can take from me—the honour of my name. Mistress, indeed! Silly fellow! No—not even your *wife*. Sooner than sell myself to such base love as yours, I should wander naked through the wild woods, and live upon the acorns of the oak. Rather than redeem him at such a price, my brave brother would spend a lifetime in your chains. Oh, that he were here! Oh, that he were witness of this foul insult! Wretch! he would smite thee like a reed to the earth."

The eye, the attitude, the foot firmly planted, the fearless, determined bearing—all

reminded me of Oçeola while delivering himself before the council. Maümee was undoubtedly his sister.

The *soi-disant* lover quailed before the withering reproach, and for some time stood shrinking and abashed.

He had more than one cause for abasement. He might feel regret at having made a proposal so ill received; but far more at the disappointment of his hopes, and the utter discomfiture of his designs.

Perhaps, the moment before, he would have smothered his chagrin, and permitted the girl to depart without molestation; but the scornful apostrophe had roused him to a sort of frenzied recklessness; and probably it was only at that moment that he formed the resolve to carry his rudeness still further, and effect his purpose by force.

I could not think that he had held such design anterior to his coming on the ground. Professed libertine though he was, he was

not the man for such perilous emprise. He was but a speck of vain conceit, and lacked the reckless daring of the ravisher. It was only when stung by the reproaches of the Indian maiden, that he resolved upon proceeding to extremes.

She had turned her back upon him, and was moving away.

"Not so fast!" cried he, rushing after, and grasping her by the wrist; "not so fast, my brown-skinned charmer! Do not think you can cast me so lightly. I have followed you for months, and, by the god Phœbus, I shall make you pay for the false smiles you have treated me to. You needn't struggle; we are alone here; and ere we part, I shall—"

I heard no more of this hurried speech; I had risen from my perch, and was hurrying down to the rescue; but before I could reach the spot, another was before me.

Haj-Ewa—her eyes glaring fiercely—with a wild maniac laugh upon her lips—was rushing forward. She held the body of the rattlesnake in her extended hands, its head projected in front, while its long neck was oscillating from side to side, shewing that the reptile was angry, and eager to make an attack. Its hiss, and the harsh "skirr-rr" of its rattles, could be heard sounding at intervals as it was carried forward.

In another instant, the maniac was face to face with the would-be ravisher, who, startled by her approach, had released his hold of the girl, and falling back a pace, stood gazing with amazement at this singular intruder.

"*Ho, ho!*" screamed the maniac, as she glided up to the spot. "His son, his son! *Ho!* I am sure of it, just like his false father—just as he, on the day he wronged the trusting Ewa. *Hulwak!* It is the hour

—the very hour—the moon in the same quarter, horned and wicked—smiling upon the guilt. *Ho, ho!* the hour of the deed—the hour of vengeance! The father's crime shall be atoned by the son. Great Spirit! give me revenge! *Chitta mico!* give me revenge!"

As she uttered these apostrophic appeals, she sprang forward, holding the snake far outstretched, as if to give it the opportunity of striking the now terrified man.

The latter mechanically drew his sword, and then, as if inspired by the necessity of defending himself, cried out:—

"Hellish sorceress! if you come a step nearer, I shall run you through the body. Back, now! Keep off, or, by——, I shall do it!"

The resolution expressed by his tone proved that the speaker was in earnest; but the appeal was unheeded. The maniac continued to advance, despite the

shining blade that menaced her, and within reach of whose point she had already arrived.

I was now close to the spot; I had drawn my own blade, and was hurrying forward to ward off the fatal blow which I expected every moment would be struck. It was my design to save Haj-Ewa, who seemed recklessly rushing upon her destruction.

In all probability, I should have been too late, had the thrust been given; but it was not.

Whether from terror at the wild, unearthly aspect of his assailants, or, what is more likely, fearing that she was about to fling the snake upon him, the man appeared struck with a sudden panic, and retreated backward.

A step or two brought him to the edge of the water. There were loose stones strewed thickly along the shore; among

these his feet became entangled; and, balancing backward, he fell with a plash upon the pond!

The water deepened abruptly, and he sank out of sight. Perhaps the sudden immersion was the means of saving his life; but the moment after, he rose above the surface, and clambered hastily up on the bank.

He was now furious, and with his drawn sword, which he had managed to retain hold of, he rushed towards the spot where Haj-Ewa still stood. His angry oaths told his determination to slay her.

It was not the soft yielding body of a woman, nor yet of a reptile, that his blade was to encounter. It struck against steel, hard and shining as his own.

I had thrown myself between him and his victims, and had succeeded in restraining Haj-Ewa from carrying out her vengeful design. As the assailant approached,

his rage, but more, the water half-blinding him, hindered him from seeing me; and it was not till our blades rasped together, that he seemed aware of my presence.

There was a momentary pause, accompanied by silence.

"You, Randolph!" at length he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise.

"Ay, Lieutenant Scott—Randolph it is. Pardon my intrusion, but your pretty love-scene changing so suddenly to a quarrel, I deemed it my duty to interfere."

"You have been listening? — you have heard? And pray, sir, what business have you either to play the spy on my actions, or interfere in my affairs?"

"Business—right—duty—the duty which all men have to protect weak innocence from the designs of such a terrible Blue Beard as you appear to be."

"By —, you shall rue this."

"Now?—or when?"

"Whenever you please."

"No time like the present. Come on!"

Not another word was spoken between us; but, the instant after, our blades were clinking in the fierce game of thrust and parry.

The affair was short. At the third or fourth lounge, I ran my antagonist through the right shoulder, disabling his arm. His sword fell jingling among the pebbles.

"You have wounded me!" cried he; "I am disarmed," he added, pointing to the fallen blade. "Enough, sir; I am satisfied."

"But not I — not till you have knelt upon these stones, and asked pardon from her whom you have so grossly insulted."

"Never!" cried he; "never!" And as he uttered these words, giving, as I presumed, a proof of determined courage, he turned suddenly; and, to my utter astonishment, commenced running away from the ground!

I ran after, and soon overtook him. I could have thrust him in the back, had I been sanguinarily inclined; but instead, I contented myself with giving him a foot-salute, in what Gallagher would have termed his "postayriors," and with no other adieu, left him to continue his shameful flight.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SILENT DECLARATION.

"Now for the love, the sweet young love
Under the *tala* tree," &c.

It was the voice of Haj-Ewa, chanting one of her favourite melodies. Far sweeter the tones of another voice pronouncing my own name:—

"George Randolph!"

"Maümee!"

"*Ho, ho!* you both remember? — still remember? *Hinklas!* The island — that fair island — fair to you, but dark in the

memory of Haj-Ewa. *Hulwak!* I'll think of't no more—no, no, no!

Now for the love, the sweet young love,
Under—

It was once mine—it is now yours: yours, mico! yours, *haintclitz!* Pretty creatures! enjoy it alone; you wish not the mad queen for a companion? Ha, ha! *Cooree, cooree.* I go; fear not the rustling wind, fear not the whispering trees; none can approach while Haj-Ewa watches. She will be your guardian. *Chitta mico,* too. Ho, *chitta mico!*

Now for the love, the sweet young love;"

and again renewing her chant, the strange woman glided from the spot, leaving me alone with Maümee.

The moment was not without embarrassment to me—perhaps to both of us. No profession had ever passed between us, no

assurance, not a word of love. Although I loved Maümee with all my heart's strength, although I now felt certain that she loved me, there had been no mutual declaration of our passion. The situation was a peculiar one, and the tongue felt restraint.

But words would have been superfluous in that hour. There was an electricity passing between us—our souls were *en rapport*, our hearts in happy communion, and each understood the thoughts of the other. Not all the words in the world could have given me surer satisfaction that the heart of Maümee was mine.

It was scarcely possible that *she* should misconceive. With but slight variation, my thoughts were hers. In all likelihood, Haj-Ewa had carried to her ears my earnest declaration. Her look was joyful—assured. She did not doubt me.

I extended my arms, opening them

widely. Nature prompted me, or perhaps passion — all the same. The silent signal was instantly understood, and the moment after, the head of my beloved was nestling upon my bosom.

Not a word was spoken. A low fond cry alone escaped her lips as she fell upon my breast, and twined her arms in rapturous compression around me.

For some moments we exchanged not speech; our hearts alone held converse.

Soon the embarrassment vanished, as a light cloud before the summer sun: not a trace of shyness remained; and we conversed in the confidence of mutual love.

I am spared the writing our love-speeches. You have yourself heard or uttered them. If too common-place to be reported, so also are they too sacred. I forbear to detail them.

We had other thoughts to occupy us. After a while, the transport of our mutual

joys, though still sweet, assumed a more sober tinge; and, half-forgetting the present, we talked of the past and the future.

I questioned Maümee much. Without guile, she gave me the history of that long interval of absence. She confessed, or rather declared — for there was no coquettish hesitation in her manner — that she had loved me from the first — even from that hour when I first saw and loved her: through the long silent years, by night as by day, had the one thought held possession of her bosom. In her simplicity, she wondered I had not known of it!

I reminded her that her love had never been declared. It was true, she said; but she had never dreamt of concealing it. She thought I might have perceived it. Her instincts were keener: she had been *conscious of mine!*

So declared she, with a freedom that

put me off my guard. If not stronger, her passion was nobler than my own.

She had never doubted me during the years of separation. Only of late; but the cause of this doubt was explained: the pseudo-lover had poured poison into her ears. Hence the errand of Haj-Ewa.

Alas! my story was not so guileless. Only part of the truth could I reveal; and my conscience smote me as I passed over many an episode that would have given pain.

But the past was past, and could not be re-enacted. A more righteous future was opening before me; and silently in my heart did I register vows of atonement. Never more should I have cause to reproach myself —never would my love—never could it—wander away from the beautiful being I held in my embrace.

Proudly my bosom swelled as I listened to the ingenuous confession of her love, but

sadly when other themes became the subject of our converse. The story of family trials, of wrongs endured, of insults put upon them —and more especially by their white neighbours, the Ringgolds—caused my blood to boil afresh.

The tale corresponded generally with what I had already learned; but there were other circumstances, unknown to public rumour. He too—the wretched hypocrite—had *made love to her*. He had of late desisted from his importunities, through fear of her brother, and dared no longer come near.

The other, Scott, had made his approaches under the guise of friendship. He had learned, what was known to many, the position of affairs with regard to the Indian widow's plantation. From his relationship in high quarters, he possessed influence, and had promised to exert it in obtaining restitution. It was a mere pretence—a promise made without any intention of being kept;

but, backed by fair words, it had deceived the generous trusting heart of Oçeola. Hence the admission of this heartless cur into the confidence of a family intimacy.

For months had the correspondence existed, though the opportunities were but occasional. During all this time had the *soi-disant* seducer been pressing his suit—though not very boldly, since he too dreaded the frown of that terrible brother—neither successfully: he had *not* succeeded.

Ringgold well knew this when he affirmed the contrary. His declaration had but one design—to sting *me*. For such purpose, it could not have been made in better time.

There was one thing I longed to know. Surely Maümee, with her keen, quick perception, from the girlish confidence that had existed between them—surely she could inform me. I longed to know the relations that had existed between my sister and her brother.

Much as I desired the information, I refrained from asking it.

And yet we talked of both—of Virginia especially, for Maüimee remembered my sister with affection, and made many inquiries in relation to her. Virginia was more beautiful than ever, she had heard, and accomplished beyond all others. She wondered if my sister would remember those walks and girlish amusements—those happy hours upon the island.

"Perhaps," thought I, "*too well.*"

It was a theme that gave me pain.

The future claimed our attention; the past was now bright as heaven, but there were clouds in the sky of the future.

We talked of that nearest and darkest—the imprisonment of Oçeola. How long would it last? What could be done to render it as brief as possible?

I promised to do everything in my power; and I purposed as I promised. It was my

firm resolve to leave no stone unturned to effect the liberation of the captive chief. If right should not prevail, I was determined to try stratagem. Even with the sacrifice of my commission—even though personal disgrace should await me—the risk of life itself—I resolved he should be free.

I needed not to add to my declaration the emphasis of an oath; I was believed without that. A flood of gratitude was beaming from those liquid orbs; and the silent pressure of love-burning lips was sweeter thanks than words could have uttered.

It was time for parting; the moon told the hour of midnight.

On the crest of the hill, like a bronze statue outlined against the pale sky, stood the mad queen. A signal brought her to our side; and after another embrace, one more fervid pressure of sweet lips, Maümee and I parted.

Her strange but faithful guardian led her away by some secret path, and I was left alone.

I could scarcely take myself away from that consecrated ground; and I remained for some minutes longer, giving full play to triumphant and rapturous reflections.

The declining moon again warned me; and, crossing the crest of the hill, I hastened back to the fort.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAPTIVE.

LATE as was the hour, I determined to visit the captive before going to rest. My design would not admit of delay; besides, I had a suspicion that, before another day passed, my own liberty might be curtailed. Two duels in one day — two antagonists wounded, and both friends of the Commander-in-chief—myself comparatively friendless—it was hardly probable I should escape "scot-free." Arrest I expected as certain —perhaps a trial by court-martial, with a fair chance of being cashiered the service.

Despite my lukewarmness in the cause in which we had become engaged, I could not contemplate this result without uneasiness. Little did I care for my commission: I could live without it; but whether right or wrong, few men are indifferent to the censure of their fellows, and no man likes to bear the brand of official disgrace. Reckless as one may be of self, kindred and family have a concern in the matter not to be lightly ignored.

Gallagher's views were different.

"Let them arrist and cashear, an' be hanged! What need you care? Divil a bit, my boy. Sowl, man, if I were in your boots, with a fine plantation and a whole regiment of black nagers, I'd snap my fingers at the sarvice, and go to raisin' shugar and tobaccay. Be St. Pathrick! that's what I'd do."

My friend's consolatory speech failed to cheer me; and, in no very joyous mood,

I walked towards the quarters of the captive, to add still further to my chances of "cashierment."

Like an eagle freshly caught and caged —like a panther in a pentrap—furious, restless, at intervals uttering words of wild menace, I found the young chief of the *Baton Rouge.*

The apartment was quite dark; there was no window to admit even the gray lustre of the night; and the corporal who guided me in carried neither torch nor candle. He went back to the guard-house to procure one, leaving me in darkness.

I heard the footfall of a man. It was the sound of a moccasined foot, and soft as the tread of a tiger; but mingling with this was the sharp clanking of a chain. I heard the breathing of one evidently in a state of excitement, and now and then an exclamation of fierce anger. Without light I could perceive that the prisoner was pacing the

apartment in rapid irregular strides. At least his limbs were free.

I had entered silently, and stood near the door. I had already ascertained that the prisoner was alone; but waited for the light before addressing him. Pre-occupied as he appeared to be, I fancied that he was not conscious of my presence.

My fancy was at fault. I heard him stop suddenly in his tracks—as if turning towards me—and the next moment his voice fell upon my ear. To my surprise, it pronounced my name. He must have seen through the darkness.

"You, Randolph!" he said, in a tone that expressed reproach; "you too in the ranks of our enemies! Armed — uniformed — equipped—ready to aid in driving us from our homes!"

"Powell!"

"Not Powell, sir; my name is Oçeola."

"To me, still Edward Powell—the friend

of my youth, the preserver of my life. By that name alone do I remember you."

There was a momentary pause. The speech had evidently produced a conciliating effect; perhaps memories of the past had come over him.

He replied:

"Your errand? Come you as a friend? or only like others, to torment me with idle words? I have had visitors already; gay gibbering fools with forked tongues, who would counsel me to dishonour. Have *you* been sent upon a like mission?"

From this speech I concluded that Scott —the pseudo-friend—had already been with the captive—likely on some errand from the agent.

"I come of my own accord—as a friend.

"George Randolph, I believe you. As a boy, you possessed a soul of honour. The straight sapling rarely grows to a crooked

tree. I will not believe that you are changed, though enemies have spoken against you. No—no; your hand, Randolph—your hand! forgive me for doubting you."

I reached through the darkness to accept the proffered salute. Instead of one, I grasped both hands of the prisoner. I felt that they were manacled together: for all that, the pressure was firm and true; nor did I return it with less warmth.

Enemies had spoken against me. I needed not to ask who these were: that had been already told me; but I felt it necessary to give the captive assurance of my friendship. I needed his full confidence to insure the success of the plan which I had conceived for his liberation; and to secure this, I detailed to him what had transpired by the pond — only a portion of what had passed. There was a portion of it I could not intrust even to the ears of a brother.

I anticipated a fresh paroxysm of fury, but was agreeably disappointed. The young chief had been accustomed to harsh developments, and could outwardly control himself; but I saw that my tale produced an impression that told deeply, if not loudly, upon him. In the darkness, I could not see his face; but the grinding teeth and hissing ejaculations were expressive of the strong passions stirring within.

"Fool!" he exclaimed at length—"blind fool that I have been! And yet I suspected this smooth-tongued villain from the first. Thanks, noble Randolph! I can never repay this act of chivalric friendship; henceforth you may command Oçeola!"

"Say no more, Powell; you have nothing to repay: it was I who was the debtor. But come, we lose time. My purpose in coming here is, to counsel you to a plan for procuring your release from this awkward con-

finement. We must be brief, else my intentions may be suspected."

"What plan, Randolph?"

"You must sign the treaty of the Oclawaha."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WAR-CRY.

A SINGLE "Ugh!" expressive of contemptuous surprise, was all the reply; and then a deep silence succeeded.

I broke the silence by repeating my demand.

"You must sign it."

"Never!" came the response, in a tone of emphatic determination—"never! Sooner than do that, I will linger among these logs till decay has worn the flesh from my bones, and dried up the blood in my veins. Sooner than turn traitor to my tribe, I will rush

against the bayonets of my jailers, and perish upon the spot. Never!"

"Patience, Powell, patience! You do not understand me—you, in common with other chiefs, appear to misconceive the terms of this treaty. Remember, it binds you to a mere conditional promise—to surrender your lands and move west, only in case a *majority of your nation agree to it.* Now, to-day a majority has *not* agreed, nor will the addition of your name make the number a majority."

"True, true," interrupted the chief, beginning to comprehend my meaning.

"Well, then, you may sign, and not feel bound by your signature, since the most essential condition still remains unfulfilled. And why should you not adopt this ruse? Ill-used, as you certainly have been, no one could pronounce it dishonourable in you. For my part, I believe you would be justified in any

expedient that would free you from so wrongful an imprisonment."

Perhaps my principles were scarcely according to the rules of moral rectitude; but at that moment they took their tone from strong emotions; and to the eyes of friendship and love the wrong was not apparent.

Oçeola was silent. I observed that he was meditating on what I had urged.

"Why, Randolph," said he, after a pause, "you must have dwelt in Philadelphia, that famed city of lawyers. I never took this view before. You are right; signing would *not* bind me, it is true. But think you that the agent would be satisfied with my signature? He hates me; I know it, and his reasons. I hate *him*, for many reasons; for this is not the first outrage I have suffered at his hands. Will he be satisfied if I sign?"

"I am almost certain of it. Simulate

submission, *if you can.* Write your name to the treaty, and you will be at once set free."

I had no doubt of this. From what I had learned since Oçeola's arrest, I had reason to believe that Thompson repented his conduct. It was the opinion of others that he had acted rashly, and that his act was likely to provoke evil consequences. Whispers of this nature had reached him; and from what the captive told me of the visit of the aid-de-camp, I could perceive that it was nothing else than a mission from the agent himself. Beyond doubt, the latter was tired of his prisoner, and would release him on the easiest terms.

"Friend! I shall act as you advise. I shall sign. You may inform the commissioner of my intention."

"I shall do so at the earliest hour I can see him. It is late; shall I say good-night?"

"Ah, Randolph! it is hard to part with a friend—the only one with a white skin now left me. I could have wished to talk over other days, but, alas! this is neither the place nor the time."

The haughty mien of the proud chief was thrown aside, and his voice had assumed the melting tenderness of early years.

"Yes," he continued, "the only white friend left—the only one whom I have any regard for—one other whom I—"

He stopped suddenly, and with an embarrassed air, as if he had found himself on the eve of disclosing some secret, which on reflection he deemed it imprudent to reveal.

I awaited the disclosure with some uneasiness, but it came not. When he spoke again, his tone and manner were completely changed.

"The whites have done us much wrong," he continued, once more rousing himself into

an angry attitude—"wrongs too numerous to be told; but, by the Great Spirit! I shall seek revenge. Never till now have I sworn it; but the deeds of this day have turned my blood into fire. Ere you came, I had vowed to take the lives of two, who have been our especial enemies. You have not changed my resolution—only strengthened it; you have added a third to the list of my deadly foes; and once more I swear—by Wykome, I swear—that I shall take no rest till the blood of these three men has reddened the leaves of the forest—three white villains, and one red traitor. Ay, Omatla! triumph in your treason—it will not be for long—soon shalt thou feel the vengeance of a patriot—soon shalt thou shrink under the steel of Oçeola."

I made no reply; but waited in silence till this outburst of passion had passed.

In a few moments the young chief became calm, and again addressed me in the language of friendship.

"One word," said he, "before we part. Circumstances may hinder us — it may be long ere we meet again. Alas! our next meeting may be as foes in the field of fight — for I will not attempt to conceal from you that I have no intention to make peace. No — never! I wish to make a request; I know, Randolph, you will accede to it, without asking an explanation. Accept this token, and if you esteem the friendship of the giver, and would honour him, wear it conspicuously upon your breast. That is all."

As he spoke, he took from around his neck a chain, upon which was suspended the image of the rising sun—already alluded to. He passed the chain over my head, until the glistening symbol hung down upon my breast.

I made no resistance to this offering of friendship, but promising to comply with his request, presented my watch in return; and,

after another cordial pressure of hands, we parted.

* * * * * * *

As I had anticipated, there was but little difficulty in obtaining the release of the Seminole chief. Though the commissioner entertained a personal hatred against Oçeola, for causes to me unknown, he dared not indulge his private spite in an official capacity. He had placed himself in a serious dilemma by what he had already done; and as I communicated the purposed submission of the prisoner, I saw that Thompson was but too eager to adopt a solution of his difficulty, easy as unexpected. He therefore lost no time in seeking an interview with the captive chief.

The latter played his part with admirable tact; the fierce, angry attitude of yesterday had given place to one of mild resignation. A night in the guard-house, hungered and manacled, had tamed down his

proud spirit, and he was now ready to accept any conditions that would restore him to liberty. So fancied the commissioner.

The treaty was produced. Oçeola signed it without saying a word. His chains were taken off; his prison-door thrown open; and he was permitted to depart without further molestation. Thompson had triumphed, or fancied so.

It was but fancy. Had he noticed, as I did, the fine satirical smile that played upon the lips of Oçeola as he stepped forth from the gate, he would scarcely have felt confidence in his triumph.

He was not allowed to exult long in the pleasant hallucination.

Followed by the eyes of all, the young chief walked off with a proud step towards the woods.

On arriving near the edge of the timber, he faced round to the fort, drew the shining

blade from his belt, waved it above his head, and in defiant tones shouted back the war-cry: "Yo-ho-ehee!"

Three times the wild signal pealed upon our ears; and at the third repetition, he who had uttered it turned again, sprang forward into the timber, and was instantly lost to our view.

There was no mistaking the intent of that demonstration; even the self-glorifying commissioner was convinced that it meant "war to the knife," and men were hurriedly ordered in pursuit.

An armed crowd rushed forth from the gate, and flung themselves on the path that had been taken by the *ci-devant* captive.

The chase proved bootless and fruitless; and after more than an hour spent in vain search, the soldiers came straggling back to the fort.

* * * * * * *

Gallagher and I had stayed all the

morning in my quarters, expecting the order that would confine me there. To our astonishment, it came not: there was no arrest.

In time, we obtained the explanation. Of my two duelling antagonists, the first had not returned to the fort after his defeat, but had been carried to the house of a friend — several miles distant. This partially covered the scandal of that affair. The other appeared with his arm in a sling; but it was the impression, as Gallagher learned outside, that his horse had carried him against a tree. For manifest reasons, the interesting invalid had not disclosed the true cause of his being "crippled," and I applauded his silence. Except to my friend, I made no disclosure of what had occurred, and it was long before the affair got wind.

Upon duty, the aid-de-camp and I often met afterwards, and were frequently com-

pelled to exchange speech; but it was always of an official character, and, I need not add, was spoken in the severest reserve.

It was not long before circumstances arose to separate us; and I was glad to part company with a man for whom I felt a profound contempt.

CHAPTER XIX.

WAR TO THE KNIFE.

For some weeks following the council at Fort King, there appeared to be tranquillity over the land. The hour of negotiation had passed—that for action was nigh; and among the white settlers, the leading topic of conversation was how the Indians would act? Would they fight, or give in? The majority believed they would submit.

Some time was granted them to prepare for the removal — runners were sent to all the tribes, appointing a day for them to bring in their horses and cattle to the

fort. These were to be sold by auction, under the superintendence of the agent; and their owners were to receive a fair value for them on their arrival at their new home in the west. Their plantations or "improvements" were to be disposed of in a similar manner.

The day of auction came round; but, to the chagrin of the commissioner, the expected flocks did not make their appearance, and the sale had to be postponed.

The failure on the part of the Indians to bring in their cattle was a hint of what might be expected; though others, of a still more palpable nature, were soon afforded.

The tranquillity that had reigned for some weeks was but the ominous silence that precedes the storm. Like the low mutterings of the distant thunder, events now began to occur, the sure harbingers of an approaching conflict.

As usual, the white man was the aggressor. Three Indians were found hunting outside the boundary of the "reserve." They were made captives by a party of white men, and, fast bound with raw-hide ropes, were confined in a log-stable belonging to one of the party. In this situation they were kept three days and nights, until a band of their own tribe, hearing of their confinement, hastened to their rescue. There was a skirmish, in which some Indians were wounded; but the white men fled, and the captives were released.

"On bringing them forth to the light, their friends beheld a most pitiable sight" — I am quoting from a faithful history — "the rope with which these poor fellows were tied had worn through the flesh; they had temporarily lost the use of their limbs, being unable to stand or walk. They had bled profusely, and had received no food during their confinement; so it may readily

be imagined that they presented a horrible picture of suffering."

Again:—"Six Indians were at their camp near Kanapaha Pond, when a party of whites came upon them, took their guns from them, examined their packs, and commenced whipping them. While in the act, two other Indians approached, and seeing what was going on, fired upon the whites. The latter returned the fire, killed one of the Indians, and severely wounded the other."

Exasperation was natural—retaliation certain. On the other side, read:—

"On the 11th of August, Dalton, the mail-carrier between Fort King and Fort Brooke, was met within six miles of the latter place by a party of Indians, who seized the reins of his horse, and dragging him from the saddle, shot him dead. The mangled body was discovered, some days afterwards, concealed in the woods."

"A party of fourteen mounted men pro-

ceeded on a scout towards Wacahonta—the plantation of Captain Gabriel Priest — and when within one mile of the place, they came upon a small hommock, through which some of the party declined passing. Four of them, however, dashed into it, when the Indians suddenly arose from ambush, and fired upon them. The two in advance were wounded. A Mr. Foulke received a bullet in his neck, but was picked up by those in his rear, and borne off. The other, a son of Captain Priest, had his arm broken, and his horse shot dead under him. He fled, and sinking his body in a swamp, succeeded in eluding the search of the pursuers."

"About the same time, a party of Indians attacked a number of men, who were employed cutting live-oak timber on an island in Lake George. The men escaped by taking to their boats, though two of their number were wounded."

"At New River, on the south-east side of the peninsula, the Indians attacked the house of a Mr. Cooley—murdered his wife, children, and a tutor engaged in the family. They carried off twelve barrels of provisions, thirty hogs, three horses, one keg of powder, over two hundred pounds of lead, seven hundred dollars in silver, and two negroes. Mr. Cooley was absent at the time. On his return, he found his wife shot through the heart, with her infant child in her arms; and his two oldest children also shot in the same place. The girl still held her book in her hands, and the boy's lay by his side. The house was in flames."

"At Spring Gorden on the St. John's, the extensive plantation of Colonel Rees was laid waste, and his buildings burnt to the ground. Sugar-cane, sufficient to manufacture ninety hogsheads, was destroyed; besides, thirty hogsheads of sugar,

and *one hundred and sixty-two negroes, were carried off.* The mules and horses were also taken. The same Indians destroyed the buildings of M. Depeyster, with *whose negroes they formed a league;* and being supplied with a boat, they crossed the river, and fired the establishment of Captain Dummett. Major Heriot's plantation was laid waste; and *eighty of his negroes moved off with the Indians.* Then on towards San Augustine, where the extensive plantations of General Hernandez were reduced to a ruin — next Bulow's, Dupont's of Buen Retiro, Dunham's, M'Rae's of Tomoka Creek, the plantations of Bayas, General Herring, and Bartalone Solano, with nearly every other from San Augustine southward."

Simple historic facts. I quote them as illustrating the events that ushered in the Seminole war. Barbarous though they be, they were but acts of retaliation — the

wild outburst of a vengeance long pent up —a return for wrongs and insults patiently endured.

As yet, no general engagement had taken place; but marauding parties sprang up simultaneously in different places. Many of those who had inflicted outrage upon the Indians were forthwith repaid; and many barely escaped with their lives. Conflagration succeeded conflagration, until the whole country was on fire.

Those who lived in the interior, or upon the borders of the Indian reserve, were compelled to abandon their crops, their stock, their implements of husbandry, their furniture, and indeed every article of value, and seek shelter within the forts, or concentrate themselves in the neighbouring villages, around which stockades were erected for their better security.

The friendly chiefs — the Omatlas and others—with about four hundred followers,

abandoned their towns, and fled to Fort Brooke for protection.

The strife was no longer hypothetical, no longer doubtful; it was declared in the wild *Yo-ho-ehee!* that night and day was heard ringing in the woods.

CHAPTER XX.

TRACING A STRANGE HORSEMAN.

As yet but few troops had reached Florida, though detachments were on the way from New Orleans, Fort Moultrie, Savannah, Mobile, and other depôts, where the soldiers of the United States are usually stationed. Corps of volunteers, however, were being hastily levied in the larger towns of Georgia, Carolina, and Florida itself; and every settlement was mustering its quota to enter upon the campaign.

It was deemed advisable to raise a force in the settlements of the Suwanee—my native

district—and on this duty my friend Gallagher was despatched, with myself to act as his lieutenant.

Right gladly did I receive this order. I should escape from the monotonous duties of the fort garrison, of which I had grown weary enough; but what was a still more pleasant prospect, I should have many days at home—for which I was not without longing.

Gallagher was as overjoyed as myself; he was a keen sportsman; though, having spent most of his life within the walls of cities, or in forts along the Atlantic seaboard, he had found only rare opportunities of enjoying either the "fox-chase" or "deer-drive." I had promised him both to his heart's content, for both the game and the "vermin" were plenteous in the woods of the Suwanee.

Not unwillingly, therefore, did we accept our recruiting commission; and, bidding

adieu to our companions at the fort, set out with light hearts and pleasant anticipations. Equally joyous was Black Jake to get back once more to the "ole plantayshun."

In the quarter of the Suwanee settlements, the Indian marauders had not yet shewn themselves. It lay remote from the towns of most of the hostile tribes, though not too distant for a determined foray. In a sort of lethargic security, the inhabitants still remained at their houses — though a volunteer force had already been mustered—and patrols were kept in constant motion.

I had frequent letters from my mother and Virginia; neither appeared to feel any alarm: my sister especially declared her confidence that the Indians would not molest them.

Withal, I was not without apprehension; and with so much the greater alacrity

did I obey the order to proceed to the settlements.

Well mounted, we soon galloped over the forest road, and approached the scenes of my early life. This time, I encountered no ambuscade, though I did not travel without caution. But the order had been given us within the hour: and having almost immediately set forth, my assassin-enemies could have had no warning of my movements. With the brave Gallagher by my side, and my stout henchman at my back, I dreaded no open attack from white men.

My only fear was that we might fall in with some straggling party of red men—now our declared enemies. In this there was a real danger; and we took every precaution to avoid such an encounter.

At several places we saw traces of the Indians nearly fresh. There were moccasin prints in the mud, and the tracks of horses that had been mounted. At one place we

observed the débris of a fire still smouldering, and around it were signs of the red men. A party had there bivouacked.

But we saw no man, red or white, until we had passed the deserted plantation upon the creek, and were approaching the banks of the river. Then, for the first time during our journey, a man was in sight.

He was a horseman, and at a glance we pronounced him an Indian. He was at too great a distance for us to note either his complexion or features; but the style of dress, his attitude in the saddle, the red sash and leggings, and, above all, the ostrich-plumes waving over his head, told us that he was a Seminole. He was mounted upon a large black horse; and had just emerged from the wood into the opening, upon which we had ourselves entered. He appeared to see us at the same time we caught sight of him, and was evidently desirous of avoiding us.

After scanning us for a moment, he wheeled his steed, and dashed back into the timber.

Imprudently enough, Gallagher put spurs to his horse and galloped after. I should have counselled a contrary course; but that the belief was in my mind that the horseman was Oçeola. In that case there could be no danger; and, from motives of friendship, I was desirous of coming up with the young chief, and exchanging a word with him. With this view, I followed my friend at a gallop—Jake coming on in the rear.

I was almost sure the strange horseman was Oçeola. I fancied I recognised the ostrich-plumes; and Jake had told me that the young chief rode a fine black horse. In all likelihood, then, it was he; and in order to hail, and bring him to a halt, I spurred ahead of Gallagher—being better mounted.

We soon entered the timber, where the horseman had disappeared. I saw the fresh

tracks, but nothing more. I shouted aloud, calling the young chief by name, and pronouncing my own; but there was no reply, save the echo of my voice.

I followed the trail for a short distance, continuing to repeat my cries; but no heed was given to them. The horseman did not wish to answer my hail, or else had ridden too far away to understand its intent.

Of course, unless he made a voluntary halt, it was vain to follow. We might ride on his trail for a week without coming up with him. Gallagher saw this as well as myself; and abandoning the pursuit, we turned once more towards the road, with the prospect of soon ending our journey.

A cross-path, which I remembered, would bring us by a shorter route to the landing, and for this we now headed.

We had not ridden far, when we again struck upon the tracks of a horse—evidently those made by the horseman we

had just pursued, but previously to our having seen him. They led in a direct line from the river, towards which we were steering.

Some slight thought prompted me to an examination of the hoof-prints. I perceived that they were *wet*—water was oozing into them from the edges; there was a slight sprinkling of water upon the dead leaves that lay along the trail. The horseman had been swimming—he had been across the river!

This discovery led me into a train of reflection. What could he—an Indian—want on the other side? If Oçeola, as I still believed, what could *he* be doing there? In the excited state of the country, it would have been risking his life for an Indian to have approached the Settlement—and to have been discovered and captured would have been certain death. This Indian, then, whoever he was, must have some powerful motive for seeking

the other side. What motive? If Oçeola, what motive?

I was puzzled—and reflected; I could think of no motive, unless that the young chief had been playing the spy —no dishonourable act on the part of an Indian.

The supposition was not improbable, but the contrary; and yet I could not bring myself to believe it true. A cloud had swept suddenly over my soul, a presentiment, scarcely defined or definable, was in my thoughts, a demon seemed to whisper in my ears: *It is not that.*

Certainly had the horseman been across the river? Let us see!

We rode rapidly along the trail, tracing it backwards.

In a few minutes it guided us to the bank, where the tracks led out from the water's edge. No corresponding trail entered near. Yes, he had been across.

I plied the spur, and plunging in, swam for the opposite shore. My companions followed without asking any questions.

Once more out of the river, I rode up the bank. I soon discovered the hoof-marks of the black horse, where he had sprung off into the stream.

Without pausing, I continued to trace them backwards, still followed by Gallagher and Jake.

The former wondered at my eagerness, and put some questions, which I scarcely answered coherently. My presentiment was each moment growing darker—my heart throbbed in my bosom with a strange indescribable pain.

The trail brought us to a small opening in the heart of a magnolia grove. It went no further. We had arrived at its end.

My eyes rested upon the ground with a sort

of mechanical gaze. I sat in the saddle in a kind of stupor. The dark presentiment was gone, but a far darker thought occupied its place.

The ground was covered with hoof-tracks, as if horses had been halted there. Most of the tracks were those of the black horse; but there were others of not half their dimensions. There was the tiny shoe-mark of a small pony.

"Golly! Massr George," muttered Jake, coming forward in advance of the other, and bending his eyes upon the ground; "lookee dar — that am tha track ob de leettle white Fox. Missa Vaginny's been hya for sartin."

CHAPTER XXI.

WHO WAS THE RIDER?

I FELT faint enough to have reeled from the saddle; but the necessity of concealing the thoughts that were passing within me kept me firm. There are suspicions that even a bosom friend may not share; and mine were of this character, if suspicions they could be called. Unhappily, they approached the nature of convictions.

I saw that Gallagher was mystified; not, as I supposed, by the tracks upon the ground, but by my behaviour in regard to them. He had observed my excited

manner on taking up the trail, and while following it; he could not have failed to do so; and now, on reaching the glade, he looked upon a pallid face, and lips quivering with emotions to him unintelligible.

"What is it, Geordie, my boy? Do you think the ridskin has been after some dhirty game. Playing the spy on your plantation, eh?"

The question aided me in my dilemma. It suggested a reply which I did not believe to be the truth.

"Likely enough," I answered, without displaying any embarrassment; an Indian spy, I have no doubt of it; and evidently in communication with some of the negroes, since this is the track of a pony that belongs to the plantation. Some of them have ridden thus far to meet him; though, for what purpose, it is difficult to guess."

"Massr George," spoke out my black follower, "dar's no one ebber ride da White Fox, 'ceptin'—"

"Jake!" I shouted, sharply interrupting him, "gallop forward to the house, and tell them we are coming. Quick, my man!"

My command was too positive to be obeyed with hesitation; and, without finishing his speech, the black put spurs to his cob, and rode rapidly past us.

It was a manœuvre of mere precaution. But the moment before, I had no thought of despatching an *avant courier* to announce us. I knew what the simple fellow was about to say: "No one ebber ride da White Fox, 'ceptin' Missa Vaginny;" and I had adopted this ruse to stifle his speech.

I glanced towards my companion, after Jake had passed out of sight. He was a man of open heart and free tongue, with not one particle of the secretive principle

in his nature. His fine florid face was seldom marked by a line of suspicion ; but I observed that it now wore a puzzled expression, and I felt uneasy. No remark, however, was made by either of us : and turning into the path which Jake had taken, we rode forward.

The path was a cattle-track—too narrow to admit of our riding abreast ; and Gallagher permitting me to act as pilot, drew his horse into the rear. In this way we moved silently onward.

I had no need to direct my horse. It was an old road to him : he knew where he was going. I took no heed of him, but left him to stride forward at his will.

I scarcely looked at the path—once or twice only—and then I saw the tracks of the pony—backward and forward ; but I heeded them no more ; I knew whence and whither they led.

I was too much occupied with thoughts

within, to notice aught without or around me.

Could it have been any other than Virginia? Who else? It was true what Jake had intended to say—that no one except my sister ever rode "White Fox"—no one upon the plantation being permitted to mount this favourite miniature of a steed.

Yes—there was an exception. I had seen Viola upon him. Perhaps Jake would have added this exception, had I allowed him to finish his speech. Might it have been Viola?

But what could be her purpose in meeting the Seminole chief?—for that the person who rode the pony had held an interview with the latter, there could not be the shadow of a doubt; the tracks told that clearly enough.

What motive could have moved the quadroon to such a meeting? Surely

none. Not surely, either: how could *I* say so? I had been long absent; many strange events had transpired in my absence—many changes. How could I tell but that Viola had grown "tired" of her sable sweetheart, and looked kindly upon the dashing chieftain? No doubt, there had been many opportunities for her seeing the latter; for, after my departure for the north, several years had elapsed before the expulsion of the Powells from their plantation. And now that I thought of it, I remembered something—a trifling circumstance that had occurred on that very day when young Powell first appeared among us: Viola had expressed admiration of the handsome youth. I remembered that this had made Black Jake very angry; that my sister, too, had been angry, and scolded Viola—as I thought at the time—for mortifying her faithful lover. Viola was a beauty, and,

like most beauties, a coquette. My conjecture might be right. It was pleasant to think so—but alas, poor Jake!

Another slight circumstance tended to confirm this view. I had observed of late a change in my henchman: he was certainly not so cheerful as of yore; he appeared more reflective—serious—dull.

God grant that this might be the explanation!

There was another conjecture that offered me a hope: one that, if true, would have satisfied me still better—for I had a strong feeling of friendship for Black Jake.

The other hypothesis was simply what Gallagher had already suggested—although White Fox was not allowed to be ridden, some of the people might have *stolen him for a ride.* It was possible, and not without probability. There might be disaffected slaves on our plantation—there were

on almost every other—who were in communication with the hostile Indians. The place was more than a mile from the house. Riding would be pleasanter than walking; and taking the pony from its pastures might be easily accomplished without fear of observation. A great black negro may have been the rider after all. God grant that *this* might be the true explanation!

The mental prayer had scarcely passed my thoughts, when an object came under my eyes, that swept my theories to the wind, sending a fresh pang through my heart.

A locust-tree grew by the side of the path, with its branches extending partially across. A strip of ribbon had caught on one of the spines, and was waving in the breeze. It was silk, and of fine texture —a bit of the trimming of a lady's dress torn off by the thorn.

To me it was a sad token. My fabric

of hopeful fancies fell into ruin at the sight. No negro — not even Viola — could have left such evidence as that; and I shuddered as I spurred past the fluttering relic.

I was in hopes my companion would not observe it; but he did. It was too conspicuous to be passed without notice. As I glanced back over my shoulder, I saw him reach out his arm, snatch the fragment from the branch, and gaze upon it with a puzzled and inquiring look.

Fearing he might ride up and question me, I spurred my horse into a rapid gallop, at the same time calling to him to follow.

Ten minutes after, we entered the lawn and pulled up in front of the house. My mother and sister had come out into the verandah to receive us; and we were greeted with words of welcome.

But I heard, or heeded them not; my

gaze was riveted on Virginia — upon her dress. It was a *riding-habit:* the plumed chapeau was still upon her head!

My beautiful sister — never seemed she more beautiful than at that moment; her cheeks were crimsoned with the wind, her golden tresses hanging over them. But it joyed me not to see her so fair: in my eyes, she appeared a fallen angel.

I glanced at Gallagher as I tottered out of my saddle: I saw that he comprehended all. Nay, more—his countenance wore an expression indicative of great mental suffering, apparently as acute as my own. My friend he was—tried and true; he had observed my anguish—he now guessed the cause; and his look betokened the deep sympathy with which my misfortune inspired him.

CHAPTER XXII.

COLD COURTESY.

I RECEIVED my mother's embrace with filial warmth; my sister's in silence—almost with coldness. My mother noticed this, and wondered. Gallagher also showed reserve in his greeting of Virginia; and neither did this pass unobserved.

Of the four, my sister was the least embarrassed; she was not embarrassed at all. On the contrary, her lips moved freely, and her eyes sparkled with a cheerful expression, as if really joyed by our arrival.

"You have been on horseback, sister?"

I said, in a tone that affected indifference as to the reply.

"Say, rather, pony-back. My little Foxey scarcely deserves the proud title of horse. Yes, I have been out for an airing."

"Alone?"

"Quite alone—*solus bolus*, as the black people have it."

"Is it prudent, sister?"

"Why not? I often do it. What have I to fear? The wolves and panthers are hunted out, and White Fox is too swift either for a bear or an alligator."

"There are creatures to be encountered in the woods more dangerous than wild beasts."

I watched her countenance as I made the remark, but I saw not the slightest change.

"What creatures, George?" she asked, in a drawling tone, imitating that in which I had spoken.

"Redskins—Indians," I answered, abruptly.

"Nonsense, brother; there are no Indians in this neighbourhood—at least," added she, with marked hesitation, "none that *we* need fear. Did I not write to tell you so? You are fresh from the hostile ground, where I suppose there is an Indian in every bush; but remember, Geordy, you have travelled a long way, and unless you have brought the savages with you, you will find none here. So, gentlemen, you may go to sleep to-night without fear of being awakened by the *Yo-ho-ehee.*"

"Is that so certain, Miss Randolph?" inquired Gallagher, now joining in the conversation, and no longer "broguing" it. "Your brother and I have reason to believe that some, who have already raised the war-cry, are not so far off from the settlements of the Suwanee."

"*Miss* Randolph! Ha, ha, ha! Why, *Mister* Gallagher, where did you learn that

respectful appellative? It is so distant, you must have fetched it a long way. It used to be Virginia, and Virgine, and Virginny, and simple 'Gin — for which last I could have spitted you, *Mister* Gallagher, and would, had you not given up calling me me so. What's the matter? It is just three months since we—that is, you and I, Mister Gallagher—met last; and scarcely two since Geordy and I parted; and now you are both here—one talking as solemnly as Solon, the other as soberly as Socrates! George, I presume, after another spell of absence, will be styling me *Miss* Randolph —I suppose that's the fashion at the fort. Come, fellows," she added, striking the balustrade with her whip, "your minds and your mouths, and give me the reason of this wonderful 'transmogrification,' for, by my word, you shall not eat till you do!"

The relation in which Gallagher stood

to my sister requires a little explanation. He was not new either to her or my mother. During their sojourn in the north, he had met them both; but the former often. As my almost constant companion, he had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with Virginia; and he had, in reality, grown well acquainted with her. They met on the most familiar terms—even to using the diminutives of each other's names; and I could understand why my sister regarded "Miss Randolph" as a rather distant mode of address; but I understood, also, why he had thus addressed her.

There was a period when I believed my friend in love with Virginia; that was shortly after their introduction to each other. But as time wore on, I ceased to have this belief. Their behaviour was not that of lovers — at least, according to my notion. They were too *friendly* to be in love. They used to romp together, and

read comic books, and laugh, and chatter by the hour about trivial things, and call each other jack-names, and the like. In fact, it was a rare thing to hear them either talk or act soberly when in each other's company. All this was so different from my ideas of how two lovers *would* act —so different from the way in which *I* should have acted — that I gave up the fancy I had held, and afterwards regarded them as two beings whose characters had a certain correspondence, and whose hearts were in unison for friendship, but not for love.

One other circumstance confirmed me in this belief: I observed that my sister, during Gallagher's absence, had little relish for gaiety, which had been rather a characteristic of her girlish days; but the moment the latter would make his appearance, a sudden change would come over her, and she would enter with *abandon* into all the idle bagatelle of the hour.

Love, thought I, does not so exhibit itself. If there was one in whom she felt a heart-interest, it was not he who was present. No — Gallagher was not the man; and the play that passed between them was but the fond familiarity of two persons who esteemed each other, without a spark of love being mixed up in the affection.

The dark suspicion that now rested upon his mind, as upon my own, had evidently saddened him — not from any feeling of jealousy, but out of pure friendly sympathy for me—perhaps, too, for her. His bearing towards her, though within the rules of the most perfect politeness, *was* changed—much changed; no wonder she took notice of it — no wonder she called for an explanation.

"Quick!" cried she, cutting the vine-leaves with her whip. "Is it a travesty, or are you in earnest? Unbosom yourselves both, or I keep my vow—you shall have no

dinner. I shall myself go to the kitchen, and countermand it."

Despite the gloomy thoughts passing within, her manner and the odd menace compelled Gallagher to break into laughter—though his laugh was far short of the hearty cachinnation she had been accustomed to hear from him.

I was myself forced to smile; and seeing the necessity of smothering my emotions, I stammered forth what might pass for an explanation. It was not the time for the true one.

"Verily, sister," said I, "we are too tired for mirth, and too hungry as well. Consider how far we have ridden, and under a broiling sun! Neither of us has tasted a morsel since leaving the fort,—and our breakfast there was none of the most sumptuous—corn-cakes and weak coffee, with pickled pork. How I long for some of Aunt Sheba's Virginia biscuits and 'chicken fixings.' Pray, let us

have our dinner, and then you shall see a change in us! We shall both be as merry as sand-boys after it."

Satisfied with this explanation, or affecting to be so—for her response was a promise to let us have our dinner—accompanied by a cheerful laugh—my sister retired to make the necessary change in her costume, while my friend and I were shown to our separate apartments.

* * * * * * *

At dinner, and afterwards, I did my utmost to counterfeit ease—to appear happy and cheerful. I noticed that Gallagher was enacting a similar *métier*.

Perhaps this seeming may have deceived my mother, but not Virginia. Ere many hours had passed I observed signs of suspicion — directed equally against Gallagher as myself. She suspected that all was not right, and began to show pique—almost spitefulness—in her conversation with us both.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MY SISTER'S SPIRIT.

For the remainder of that day and throughout the next, this unsatisfactory state of things continued, during which time the three of us —my friend, my sister, and myself—acted under a polite reserve. It was triangular, for I had not made Gallagher my confidant, but left him entirely to his conjectures. He was a true gentleman; and never even hinted at what he must have well known was engrossing the whole of my thoughts. It was my intention to unbosom myself to him, and seek his friendly advice, but not until a little time

had elapsed, not till I had obtained a full *éclaircissement* from Virginia.

I waited for an opportunity to effect this. Not but that many a one offered—many a time might I have found her alone; but on each occasion my resolution forsook me. I actually dreaded to bring her to a confession.

And yet I felt that it was my duty. As her brother—the nearest male relative, it was mine to guard her honour — to preserve the family escutcheon pure and untarnished.

For days was I withheld from this fraternal duty—partly by a natural feeling of delicacy — partly by a fear of the disclosure I might draw forth. I dreaded to know the truth. That a correspondence had passed between my sister and the Indian chief— that it was in all probability still going on — that a clandestine meeting had taken place—more than one mayhap —

all this I knew well enough. But to what length had these proceedings been carried? How far had my poor sister compromised herself? These were the interrogatories to which I dreaded the answer.

I believed she would tell me the truth —that is, if entreated; if commanded, *no*.

Of the last, I felt satisfied. I knew her proud spirit prouder of late. When roused to hostility, she could be capable of the most obstinate resistance — firm and unyielding. There was much of my mother's nature in her, and little of my father's. Personally, as already stated, she resembled her mother; intellectually, there was also a similitude. She was one of those women — for she now deserved the title — who have never known the restraint of a severe discipline, and who grow up in the belief that they have no superior, no master upon earth. Hence the full development of a feeling of perfect independence, which,

among American women, is common enough, but in other lands can only exist among those of the privileged classes. Uncontrolled by parent, guardian, or teacher — for this last had not been allowed to "rule by the rod"—my sister had grown to the age of womanhood, and she felt herself as masterless as a queen upon her throne.

She was independent in another sense—one which exerts a large influence over the freedom of the spirit—her fortune was her own.

In the States of America the law of entail is not allowed; it is even provided against by statute. Those statesmen-presidents who in long line succeeded the Father of the Republic were wise legislators. They saw lurking under this wicked law—which at most appears only to affect the family relations—the strong arm of the political tyrant; and therefore took measures to guard against its introduction to

the land. Wisely did they act, as time will shew, or indeed has shewn already; for had the congress of Washington's day but sanctioned the law of entail, the great American republic would long since have passed into an oligarchy.

Untrammelled by any such unnatural statute, my father had acted as all men of proper feeling are likely to do; he had followed the dictates of the heart, and divided his property in equal shares between his children. So far as independence of fortune went, my sister was my equal.

Of course, our mother had not been left unprovided for, but the bulk of the patrimonial estate now belonged to Virginia and myself.

My sister, then, was an heiress — quite independent of either mother or brother— bound by no authority to either, except that which exists in the ties of the heart —in filial and sororal affection.

I have been minute with these circumstances, in order to explain the delicate duty I had to perform in calling my sister to an account.

Strange that I reflected not on my own anomalous position. At that hour, it never entered my thoughts. Here was I affianced to the sister of this very man, with the sincere intention of making her my wife.

I could perceive nothing unnatural, nothing disgraceful in the alliance — neither would society. Such, in earlier times, had done honour to Rolfe, who had mated with a maiden of darker skin, less beauty, and far slighter accomplishments than Maümee. In later days, hundreds of others had followed his example, without the loss either of *caste* or character; and why should not I? In truth, the question had never occurred to me, for it never entered my thoughts that my purpose in regard to my

Indian *fiancée* was otherwise than perfectly *en règle.*

It would have been different had there been a taint of *African blood* in the veins of my intended. Then, indeed, might I have dreaded the frowns of society—for in America it is not the colour of the skin that condemns, but the blood—the blood. The white gentleman may marry an Indian wife; she may enter society without protest —if beautiful, become a belle.

All this I knew, while at the same time I was slave to a belief in the monstrous anomaly that where the blood is mingled from the other side—where the woman is white and the man red — the union becomes a *mésalliance*, a disgrace. By the friends of the former, such a union is regarded as a misfortune—a fall; and when the woman chances to be a *lady* — ah! then, indeed—

Little regard as I had for many of my

country's prejudices regarding race and colour, I was not free from the influence of this social maxim. To believe my sister in love with an Indian, would be to regard her as lost—fallen! No matter how high in rank among his own people — no matter how brave — how accomplished he might be — no matter it were Oçeola himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ASKING AN EXPLANATION.

SUSPENSE was preying upon me; I could endure it no longer. I at length resolved on demanding an explanation from my sister, as soon as I should find her alone.

The opportunity soon offered. I chanced to see her in the lawn, down near the edge of the lake. I saw that she was in a mood unusually cheerful.

"Alas!" thought I, as I approached full of my resolutions—"these smiles! I shall soon change them to tears. Sister!"

She was talking to her pets, and did not hear me, or pretended she did not.

"Sister!" I repeated in a louder voice.

"Well, what is it?" she inquired drily, without looking up.

"Pray, Virginia, leave off your play, and talk to me."

"Certainly that is an inducement. I have had so little of your tongue of late, that I ought to feel gratified by your proposal. Why don't you bring your friend, and let him try a little in that line too? You have been playing double-dummy long enough to get tired of it, I should think. But go on with the game, if it please you; it don't trouble me, I assure you.

A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally high ho, you know!
Won't strike to the foe while the sky it is blue,
And a tar's aloft or alow.

Come now, little Fan! Fan! don't go too near the bank, or you may get a ducking, do you hear?"

"Pray, sister Virginia, give over this badinage: I have something of importance to say to you."

"Importance! What! are you going to get married? No, that can't be it—your face is too portentous and lugubrious: you look more like one on the road to be hanged—ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you, sister, I am in earnest."

"Who said you wasn't? In earnest? I believe you, my boy."

"Listen to me, Virginia. I have something important — very important to talk about. I have been desirous of breaking the subject to you ever since my return."

"Well, why did you not? — you have had opportunities enough. Have I been hidden from you?"

"No—but—the fact is—"

"Go on, brother; you have an opportunity now. If it be a petition, as your

looks appear to say, present it; I am ready to receive it."

"Nay, Virginia; it is not that. The subject upon which I wish to speak—"

"What subject, man? Out with it!"

I was weary with so much circumlocution, and a little piqued as well; I resolved to bring it to an end. A word, thought I, will tame down her tone, and render her as serious as myself. I answered:—

"Oçeola."

I looked to see her start, to see her cheek turn alternately red and pale; but to my astonishment, no such symptoms displayed themselves; not the slightest indication of any extraordinary emotion betrayed itself either in her look or manner.

She replied almost directly, and without hesitation:—

"What! the young chief of the Seminoles? our old playfellow, Powell? He is

to be the subject of our discourse? You could not have chosen one more interesting to *me.* I could talk all day long about this brave fellow!"

I was struck dumb by her reply, and scarcely knew in what way to proceed.

"But what of him, brother George?" continued my sister, looking me more soberly in the face. "I hope no harm has befallen him?"

"None that I know of: the harm has fallen upon those nearer and dearer."

"I do not understand you, mysterious brother."

"But you shall. I am about to put a question to you—answer me, and answer me truly, as you value my love and friendship."

"Your question, sir, without these insinuations. I can speak the truth, I fancy, without being scared by threats."

"Then speak it, Virginia. Tell me, is Powell—is Oçeola—your lover?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Nay, Virginia, this is no laughing matter."

"By my faith, I think it is — a very capital joke—ha, ha, ha!"

"I want no trifling, Virginia; an answer."

"You shall get no answer to such an absurd question."

"It is not absurd. I have good reasons for putting it."

"Reasons—state them, pray!"

"You cannot deny that something has passed between you? You cannot deny that you have given him a meeting, and in the forest too? Beware how you make answer, for I have the proofs. We encountered the chief on his return. We saw him at a distance. He shunned us—no wonder. We followed his trail — we saw

the tracks of the pony—oh! you met: it was all clear enough."

"Ha, ha, ha! What a pair of keen trackers—you and your friend—astute fellows! You will be invaluable on the war-path. You will be promoted to be chief spies to the army. Ha, ha, ha! And so, this is the grand secret, is it? this accounts for the demure looks, and the old-fashioned airs that have been puzzling me. My honour, eh? that was the care that was cankering you. By Diana! I have reason to be thankful for being blessed with such a chivalric brace of guardians.

In England, the garden of beauty is kept
By the dragon of prudery, placed within call;
But so oft this unamiable dragon has slept,
That the garden was carelessly watched after all.

And so, if I have not the dragon prudery to guard me, I am to find a brace of dragons in my brother and his friend. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Virginia, you madden me — this is no answer. Did you meet Oçeola?"

"I'll answer that directly: after such sharp espionage, denial would not avail me. I *did* meet him."

"And for what purpose? Did you meet as lovers?"

"That question is impertinent; I won't answer *it*."

"Virginia! I implore you—"

"And cannot two people encounter each other in the woods, without being charged with love-making? Might we not have come together by chance? or might I not have had other business with the Seminole chief? You do not know all my secrets, nor do I intend you shall either."

"Oh, it was no chance encounter — it was an appointment — a love meeting: you could have no other affair with *him*."

"It is natural for you to think so—very natural, since I hear you practise such

duettoes yourself. How long, may I ask, since you held your last *tête-à-tête* with your own fair charmer — the lovely Maümee? Eh! brother?"

I started as if stung. How could my sister have gained intelligence of this? Was she only guessing? and had chanced upon the truth?

For some moments, I could not make reply, nor did I make any to her last interrogatory. I paid no heed to it, but becoming excited, pressed my former inquiries with vehemence.

"Sister! I must have an explanation; I insist upon it—I demand it!"

"Demand! Ho! that is your tone, is it? That will scarcely serve you. A moment ago, when you put yourself in the imploring attitude, I had well-nigh taken pity on you, and told you all. But *demand*, indeed! I answer no demands; and to shew you that I do not, I shall now go

and shut myself in my room. So, my good fellow, you shall see no more of me for this day, nor to-morrow either, unless you come to your senses. Good-bye, Geordy—and *au revoir*, only on condition you behave yourself like a gentleman.

> A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
> Tally high ho, you know!
> Won't strike to the foe," &c. &c.

And with this catch pealing from her lips, she passed across the parterre, entered the verandah, and disappeared within the doorway.

Disappointed, mortified, sad, I stood riveted to the spot, scarcely knowing in what direction to turn myself.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE VOLUNTEERS.

My sister kept her word. I saw no more of her for that day, nor until noon of the next. Then she came forth from her chamber in full riding costume, ordered White Fox to be saddled, and, mounting, rode off alone.

I felt that I had no power over this capricious spirit. It was idle to attempt controlling it. She was beyond the dictation of fraternal authority—her own mistress—and evidently determined upon having her will and her way.

After the conversation of yesterday, I felt no inclination to interfere again. She was acquainted with my secret; and knowing this, any counsel from me would come with an ill grace, and be as ill received. I resolved, therefore, to withhold it, till some crisis should arrive that would render it more impressive.

For several days this coolness continued between us—at which my mother often wondered, but of which she received no explanation. Indeed, I fancied that even *her* affection towards me was not so tender as it used to be. Perhaps I was wronging her. She was a little angry with me about the duel with Ringgold, the first intelligence of which had gravely affected her. On my return I had received her reproaches, for it was believed that I alone was to blame in bringing the affair about. "Why had I acted so rudely towards Arens Ringgold? And all about nothing? A trumpery Indian

belle? What mattered it to me what may have been said about the girl? Likely what was said was nothing more than the truth. I should have behaved with more prudence."

I perceived that my mother had been informed upon most of the material points connected with the affair. Of one, however, she was ignorant: she knew not who the "trumpery Indian belle" was—she had not heard the name of Maümee. Knowing her to be ignorant of this, I listened with more calmness to the aspersive remarks.

For all that, I was somewhat excited by her reproaches, and several times upon the point of declaring to her the true cause why I called Ringgold to an account. For certain reasons I forbore. My mother would not have believed me.

As for Ringgold himself, I ascertained that a great change in his fortunes had

lately taken place. His father was dead—had died in a fit of passion, whilst in the act of chastising one of his slaves. A blood-vessel had burst, and he had fallen, as if by a judgment of God.

Arens, the only son, was now master of his vast, ill-gotten wealth—a plantation with some three hundred slaves upon it; and it was said that this had only made him more avaricious than ever.

His aim was—as it had been that of the older Ringgold—to become owner of everybody and everything around him—a grand money-despot. The son was a fit successor to the father.

He had played the invalid for a while—carrying his arm in a sling—and, as people said, not a little vain of having been engaged in a duel. Those who understood how that affair had terminated thought he had little reason to be proud of it.

It seemed the hostility beteen him and my-

self had brought about no change in his relations with our family. I learned that he had been a constant visitor at the house, and the world still believed him the accepted suitor of Virginia. Moreover, since his late accession to wealth and power, he had grown more than ever a favourite with my ambitious mother. I learned all this with regret.

The old home appeared to have undergone a change. There was not the same warmth of affection as of yore. I missed my kind, noble father. My mother at times appeared cold and distant, as if she believed me undutiful. My uncle was her brother, and like her in everything; even my fond sister seemed for the moment estranged.

I began to feel as a stranger in my own house, and, feeling so, stayed but little at home. Most of the day was I abroad, with Gallagher as my companion. Of course, my friend remained our guest during our stay on the Suwanee.

Our time was occupied, partly with the duties upon which we had been commanded, and partly in following the amusement of the chase. Of deer-hunting and fox-running we had an abundance; but I did not enjoy it as formerly; neither did my companion—ardent sportsman though he was—seem to take the delight in it which he had anticipated.

Our military duties were by no means of an arduous nature, and were usually over before noon. Our orders had been, not so much to recruit volunteers as to superintend the organisation of those already raised, and "muster them into service." A corps had already advanced some length towards formation, having elected its own officers, and enrolled most of its rank and file. Our part was to inspect, instruct, and govern them.

The little church, near the centre of the settlement, was the head-quarters of the

corps; and there the drill was daily carried on.

The men were mostly of the poorer class of white settlers—small renting planters—and squatters who dwelt along the swamp-edges, and who managed to eke out a precarious subsistence partly by the use of their axes, and partly from the product of their rifles. The old hunter Hickman was among the number; and what did not much surprise me, I found the worthies, Spence and Williams, enrolled in the corps. Upon these scamps I was determined to keep a watchful eye, and hold them at a weary distance.

Many of the privates were men of a higher class—for the common danger had called all kinds into the field.

The officers were usually planters of wealth and influence; though there were some who, from the democratic influence of elections, were but ill qualified to wear epaulettes.

Many of these gentlemen bore far higher official titles than either Gallagher or myself. Colonels and majors appeared to be almost as numerous as privates. But for all this, they did not demur to our exercising authority over them. In actual war-time, it is not uncommon for a lieutenant of the "line," or the lowest subaltern of the regular army, to be placed in command of a full colonel of militia or volunteers!

Here and there was an odd character, who, perhaps, in earlier life, had "broken down" at West Point, or had gone through a month of campaigning service in the Creek wars under "Old Hickory." These, fancying themselves *au fait* in the military art, were not so pleasant to deal with; and at times it required all Gallagher's determined firmness to convince them that *he* was Commander-in-chief upon the Suwanee.

My friend's reputation as a "fire-eater," which had preceded him, had as much weight

in confirming his authority as the commission which he brought with him from "head-quarters."

Upon the whole, we got along smoothly enough with these gentlemen—most of whom seemed desirous of learning their duty, and submitted to our instructions with cheerfulness.

There was no lack of champagne, brandy, and cigars. The neighbouring planters were hospitable; and had myself or my friend been inclined to dissipation, we could not have been established in better quarters for indulging the propensity.

To this, however, neither of us gave way; and our moderation, no doubt, caused us to be held in higher esteem, even among the hard drinkers by whom we were surrounded.

Our new life was by no means disagreeable; and but for the unpleasantness that had arisen at home, I could

have felt for the time contented and happy.

At home—at home—there was the canker: it appeared no longer a home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MYSTERIOUS CHANGES.

Not many days had elapsed before I observed a sudden change in the conduct of Gallagher; not towards myself, or my mother, but in his manner towards Virginia.

It was the day after I had held the conversation with her that I first noticed this. I noticed at the same time that her manner towards him was equally altered.

The somewhat frosty politeness that had hitherto been observed between them appeared to have suddenly thawed, and their old genial friendship to become re-established on its former footing.

They now played, and sang, and laughed together, and read, and chattered nonsense, as they had been used to do in times past.

"Ah!" thought I, "it is easy for him to forget; he is but a friend, and, of course, cannot have the feelings of a brother. Little matters it to him what may be her secret relations, or with whom. What need he care about her improprieties? She is good company, and her winning way has beguiled him from dwelling upon that suspicion, which he must have entertained as well as myself. He has either forgotten, forgiven, or else found some explanation of her conduct that seems to satisfy him. At all events *I* appear to have lost his sympathy, while *she* has regained his confidence and friendship."

I was at first astonished at this new phase in the relations of our family circle—afterwards puzzled by it.

I was too proud and piqued to ask Gallagher for an explanation; and, as he

did not volunteer to give one, I was compelled to abide in ignorance.

I perceived that my mother also regarded this altered behaviour with surprise, and also with a feeling of a somewhat different kind—suspicion.

I could guess the reason of this. She fancied that they were growing too fond of each other — that, notwithstanding he had no fortune but his pay-roll, Virginia might fancy the dashing soldier for a husband.

Of course my mother, having already formed designs as to the disposal of her daughter, could not calmly contemplate such a destiny as this. It was natural enough, then, she should look with a jealous eye upon the gay confidence that had been established between them.

I should have been glad if I could have shared my mother's suspicions; happy if my sister had but fixed her affections there.

My friend would have been welcome to call me brother. Fortuneless though he might be, I should have made no opposition to that alliance.

But it never entered my thoughts that there was aught between the two but the old rollicking friendship; and love acts not in that style. So far as Captain Gallagher was concerned, I could have given my mother assurance that would have quieted her fears.

And yet to a stranger they might have appeared as lovers—almost to anyone except myself. They were together half the day and half the night: they rode together into the woods, and were sometimes absent for hours at a time. I perceived that my comrade began to care little for *my* company, and daily less. Stranger still, the chase no longer delighted him! As for duty, this he sadly neglected, and had not the "lieutenant" been on the ground, I

fear the "corps" would have stood little chance of instruction.

As days passed on, I fancied that Gallagher began to relapse into a more sober method. He certainly seemed more thoughtful. This was when my sister was out of sight. It was not the air he had worn after our arrival—but very different.

It certainly resembled the bearing of a man in love. He would start on hearing my sister's voice from without—his ear was quick to catch every word from her, and his eyes expressed delight whenever she came into the room. Once or twice, I saw him gazing at her with an expression upon his countenance that betokened more than friendship.

My old suspicions began to return to me. After all, he *might* be in love with Virginia ?

Certainly, she was fair enough to impress the heart even of this adamantine soldier.

Gallagher was no lady's man — had never been known to seek conquests over the sex —in fact, felt some awkwardness in their company. My sister seemed the only one before whom he could converse with fluency or freedom.

Notwithstanding, and after all, he *might* be in love?

I should have been pleased to know it, could I only have insured him a reciprocity of his passion; but, alas! that was not in my power.

I wondered whether *she* ever thought of him as a lover; but no—she could not—not if she was thinking of—

And yet her behaviour towards him was at times of such a character that a stranger to her eccentricities would have fancied she loved him. Even I was mystified by her actions. She either had some feeling for him, beyond that of mere friendship, or made show of it. If he loved her, and she knew

it, then her conduct was cruel in the extreme.

I indulged in such speculations, though only when I could not restrain myself from dwelling upon them. They were unpleasant; at times even painful.

I lived in a maze of doubt, puzzled and perplexed at what was passing around me; but at this time there turned up a new chapter in our family history, that, in point of mystery, eclipsed all the others. A piece of information reached me, that, if true, must sweep all these new-sprung theories out of my mind.

I learned that my sister was *in love with Arens Ringgold* — in other words, that she was "listening to his addresses!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

MY INFORMANT.

THIS I had upon the authority of my faithful servant, Black Jake. Upon almost any other testimony, I should have been incredulous; but his was unimpeachable. Negro as he was, his perceptions were keen enough; while his earnestness proved that he believed what he said. He had reasons, and gave them.

I received the strange intelligence in this wise:

I was seated by the bathing-pond, alone, busied with a book, when I heard Jake's

familiar voice pronouncing my name: "Massr George."

"Well, Jake?" I responded, without withdrawing my eyes from the page.

"Ise wanted all da mornin' to git you 'lone by yarself; ise want to hab a leetle bit ob a convasayshun, Massr George."

The solemn tone, so unusual in the voice of Jake, awoke my attention. Mechanically closing the book, I looked up in his face: it was solemn as his speech.

"A conversation with me, Jake?"

"Ye, massr—dat am if you isn't ingage?"

"Oh, by no means, Jake. Go on: let me hear what you have to say."

"Poor fellow!" thought I—"he has his sorrows too. Some complaint about Viola. The wicked coquette is torturing him with jealousy; but what can *I* do? I cannot *make* her love him—no. 'One man may lead a horse to the water, but forty can't make him drink.' No; the little jade will

act as she pleases, in spite of any remonstrance on my part. Well, Jake?"

"Wa, Massr George, I doant meself like to intafere in tha 'fairs ob da family—daat I doant; but ye see, massr, things am a gwine all wrong—all wrong, by Golly!"

"In what respect?"

"Ah, massr, dat young lady—data young lady."

Polite of Jake to call Viola a young lady.

"You think she is deceiving you?"

"More dan me, Massr George—more dan me."

"What a wicked girl! But, perhaps, Jake, you only fancy these things? Have you had any proofs of her being unfaithful? Is there anyone in particular who is now paying her attentions?"

"Yes, massr; berry partickler—nebber so partickler before—nebber."

"A white man?"

"Gorramighty, Massr George!" exclaimed Jake, in a tone of surprise; "you do talk kewrious: ob coorse it am a white man. No odder dan a white man dar shew 'tention to tha young lady."

I could not help smiling. Considering Jake's own complexion, he appeared to hold very exalted views of the unapproachableness of his charmer by those of her own race. I had once heard him boast that he was the "only man ob colour dat could shine *thar*." It was a white man, then, who was making his misery.

"Who is he, Jake?" I inquired.

"Ah, massr, he am dat ar villain debbil, Arums Ringgol'!"

"What! Arens Ringgold?—he making love to Viola?"

"Viola! Gorramighty, Massr George!" exclaimed the black, staring till his eyes showed only the whites—"Viola! Gorramighty, I nebber say Viola!—nebber!"

"Of whom, then, are you speaking?"

"O massr, did I not say da young lady? dat am tha young missa—Missa Vaginny."

"Oh! my sister you mean. Poh, poh! Jake. That is an old story. Arens Ringgold has been paying his addresses to my sister for many years; but with no chance of success. You needn't trouble yourself about that, my faithful friend; there is no danger of their getting married. She doesn't like him, Jake—I wonder who does or could—and even if she did, I would not permit it. But there's no fear, so you may make your mind easy on that score."

My harangue seemed not to satisfy the black. He stood scratching his head, as if he had something more to communicate. I waited for him to speak.

"'Scoose me, Massr George, for da freedom, but dar you make mighty big mistake. It am true dar war a time when Missa Vaginny she no care for dat ar snake in da

grass. But de times am change: him father —da ole thief—he am gone to tha udda world; tha young un he now rich—he big planter—tha biggest on da ribber: ole missa she 'courage him come see Missa Vaginny —'cause he rich, he good spec."

"I know all that, Jake: my mother always wished it; but that signifies nothing —my sister is a little self-willed, and will be certain to have her own way. There is no fear of her giving her consent to marry Arens Ringgold."

"'Scoose me, Massr George, 'scoose me 'gain—I tell you, massr, you make mistake: she a'most consent now."

"Why, what has put this notion into your head, my good fellow?"

"Viola, massr. Dat ere quadroon tell me all."

"So, you are friends with Viola again?"

"Ye, Massr George, we good friend as ebber. Twar only my s'picion — I war

wrong. She good gal — she true as de rifle. No more s'picion o' her, on de part ob Jake—no."

"I am glad of that. But pray, what has she told you about Arens Ringgold and my sister?"

"She tell me all: she see somethin' ebbery day."

"Every day! Why, it is many days since Arens Ringgold has visited here?"

"No, massr; dar you am mistake 'gain: Mass Arums he come to da house ebbery day —a'most ebbery day."

"Nonsense; I never saw him here. I never heard of his having been, since my return from the fort."

"But him hab been, for all dat, massr; I see 'im meseff. He come when you gone out. He be here when we goes a huntin'. I see um come yest'day, when you an' Mass Garger war away to tha bolunteers—dat he war sat'n."

"You astonish me."

"Dat's not all, massr. Viola she say dat Missa Vaginny she 'have diffrent from what she used to: he talk love; she not angry no more; she listen to him talk. Oh, Massr George, Viola think she give her consent t' marry him: dat would be dreadful thing—berry, berry dreadful."

"Jake," said I, "listen to me. You will stay by the house when I am absent. You will take note of every one who comes and goes; and whenever Arens Ringgold makes his appearance on a visit to the family, you will come for me as fast as horse can carry you."

"Gollys! dat I will, Massr George: you nebber fear, I come fass enuff—like a streak ob de greased lightnin'."

And with this promise, the black left me.

* * * * * * *

With all my disposition to be incredulous, I could not disregard the information

thus imparted to me. Beyond doubt, there was truth in it. The black was too faithful to think of deceiving me, and too astute to be himself deceived.

Viola had rare opportunities for observing all that passed within our family circle; and what motive could she have for inventing a tale like this?"

Besides Jake had himself seen Ringgold on visits — of which *I* had never been informed. This confirmed the other — confirmed all.

What was I to make of it? Three who appear as lovers — the chief, Gallagher, Arens Ringgold! Has she grown wicked, abandoned, and is coquetting with all the world?

Can she have a thought of Ringgold? No—it is not possible. I could understand her having an affection for the soldier — a romantic passion for the brave and certainly handsome chief; but for Arens Ringgold—a

squeaking, conceited snob, with nought but riches to recommend him — this appeared utterly improbable.

Of course, the influence was my mother's; but never before had I entertained a thought that Virginia would yield. If Viola spoke the truth, she had yielded, or was yielding.

"Ah, mother, mother! little knowest thou the fiend you would introduce to your home, and cherish as your child."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OLD HICKMAN.

THE morning after, I went as usual to the recruiting quarters. Gallagher was along with me, as upon this day the volunteers were to be "mustered into service,"* and our presence was necessary at the administering of the oath.

* In the United States, a volunteer corps or regiment "raises itself." When the numbers are complete, and the officers elected, if the government accept its services, both officers and men are then "mustered in"—in other words, sworn to serve for a fixed period, under exactly the same regulations as the regular troops, with like pay, rations, &c.

A goodly company was collected, forming a troop more respectable in number than appearance. They were "mounted volunteers;" but as each individual had been his own quartermaster, no two were either armed or mounted alike. Nearly all carried rifles, though there were a few who shouldered the old family musket—a relic of revolutionary times — and some were simply armed with single or double-barrelled shot-guns. These, however, loaded with heavy buck-shot, would be no contemptible weapons in a skirmish with Indians. There were pistols of many sorts — from the huge brass-butted holsters to small pocket-pistols—single and double-barrelled — but no revolvers, for as yet the celebrated "Colt"* had not made its ap-

* The military corps first armed with Colt's pistols was the regiment of Texan Rangers. Its first trial in actual warfare occurred in the war between the United States and Mexico in a skirmish with the guerilla band

pearance in frontier warfare. Every volunteer carried his knife—some dagger-shaped with ornamented hafts; while the greater number were long, keen blades, similar to those in use among butchers. In the belts of many were stuck small hatchets, an imitation of the Indian tomahawk. These were to serve the double purpose of cutting a way through the brushwood, or breaking in the skull of a savage, as opportunity might offer.

The equipments consisted of powder-horns, bullet-pouches, and shot-belts—in short, the ordinary sporting gear of the frontiersman or amateur hunter when out upon the "still hunt" of the fallow-deer.

The "mount" of the troop was as varied as the arms and the accoutrements: horses from thirteen hands to seventeen; the tall

of Padre Jaranta. 125 *guerrilleros* were put *hors de combat* in less than fifteen minutes by this effective weapon.

raw-boned steed; the plump cob-shaped roadster; the tight, wiry native of the soil, of Andalusian race;* the lean, worn-out "critter," that carried on his back the half-ragged squatter, side by side with the splendid Arabian charger, the fancy of some dashing young planter who bestrode him, with no slight conceit in the grace and grandeur of his display. Not a few were mounted upon mules, both of American and Spanish origin; and these, when well trained to the saddle, though they may not equal the horse in the charge, are quite equal to him in a campaign against an Indian foe. Amid thickets — through forests of heavy timber, where the ground is a marsh, or strewn with logs, fallen branches, and matted with prostrate parasites, the hybrid will make way safely, when the horse will sink or stumble. Some

* The horse was introduced into Florida by the Spaniards, hence the breed.

of the most experienced backwoods hunters, while following the chase, prefer a mule to the high-mettled steed of Arabia.

Motley were the dresses of the troop. There were uniforms, or half-uniforms, worn by some of the officers; but among the men no two were dressed in like fashion. Blanket-coats of red, blue, and green; linsey-woolseys of coarse texture, gray or copper coloured; red flannel shirts; jackets of brown linen, or white—some of yellow nankin cotton — a native fabric; some of sky-blue cottonade; hunting-shirts of dressed deer-skin, with moccasins and leggings; boots of horse or alligator hide, highlows, brogans—in short, every variety of *chaussure* known throughout the States.

The head-gear was equally varied and fantastic. No stiff shakos were to be seen there; but caps of skin, and hats of wool and felt, and straw and palmetto-leaf, broad-brimmed, scuffed, and slouching. A

few had forage-caps of blue cloth, that gave somewhat of a military character to the wearers.

In one respect, the troop had a certain uniformity; they were all eager for the fray — burning for a fight with the hated savages, who were committing such depredations throughout the land. When were they to be led against them? This was the inquiry constantly passing through the ranks of the volunteer array.

Old Hickman was among the most active. His age and experience had procured him the rank of sergeant by free election; and I had many opportunities of conversing with him. The alligator-hunter was still my true friend, and devoted to the interests of our family. On this very day I chanced to be with him alone, when he gave proof of his attachment by volunteering a conversation I little expected from him. Thus he began:—

"May a Injun sculp me, lootenant, if I kin bar the thought o' that puke a marrin' yur sister."

"Marrying my sister—who?" I inquired in some surprise. Was it Gallagher he meant?

"Why, in coorse the fellar as everybody sez is a goin' to—that cussed pole-cat o' a critter, Ary Ringgold."

"Oh! him you mean? Everybody says so, do they?"

"In coorse — it's the hul talk o' the country. Durn me, George Randolph, if I'd let him. Yur sister—the putty critter —she ur the finest an' the hansomest gurl in these parts; an' for a durned skunk like thet, not'ithstandin' all his dollars, to git her, I can't a bear to hear o't. Why, George, I tell you, he'll make her mis'able for the hul term o' her nat'ral life — that ere's what he'll be sartint to do—durnation to him!"

"You are kind to counsel me, Hickman; but I think the event you dread is not likely ever to come to pass."

"Why do people keep talking o't, then? Everybody says it's a goin' to be. If it wan't thet I'm an old friend o' yur father, George, I wudn't ha' tuk sich a liberty; but I war his friend, an' I im *yur* friend; an' thurfor it be I hev spoke on the matter. We may talk o' Injuns; but thur ain't ne'er a Injun in all Floridy is as big a thief as them Ringgolds—father an' son, an' the hul kit o' them. The old un, he's clurred out from hyar, an' whar he's gone to 'tain't hard to tell. Ole Scratch hez got hold o' him, an' I reck'n he'll be catchin' it by this time for the deviltries he carried on while about hyar. He'll git paid up slick for the way he treated them poor half-breeds on tother side the crik."

"The Powells?"

"Ye-es—that wur the durndest piece o'

unjustice I ever know'd o' in all my time. By ——, it wur!"

"You know what happened them, then?"

"Sartintly I do; every trick in the whole game. 'Twur a leetle o' the meanest transackshun I ever know'd a white—an' a white that called himself a gentleman—to have a hand in. By ——, it wur!"

Hickman now proceeded, at my request, to detail with more minuteness than I had yet heard them the facts connected with the robbery of the unfortunate family.

It appeared, by his account, that the Powells had not voluntarily gone away from the plantation; that, on the contrary, their removal had been to the friendless widow the most painful thing of all. Not only was the land of great value—the best in the whole district—but it had been to her the scene of a happy life — a home endeared by early love, by the memory of a kind husband, by every tie of the

heart's affection; and she had only parted from it when driven out by the strong arm of the law — by the staff of the sheriff-officer.

Hickman had been present at the parting scene, and described it in rough but feeling terms; he told me of the sad unwillingness which the family exhibited at parting; of the indignant reproaches of the son—of the tears and entreaties of mother and daughter —how the persecuted widow had offered everything left her—her personal property— even the trinkets and jewels—souvenirs given her by her departed husband—if the ruffians would only allow her to remain in possession of the house — the old homestead, consecrated to her by long happy years spent under its roof.

Her appeals were in vain. The heartless persecutor was without compassion, and she was driven forth.

Of all these things, the old hunter spoke

freely and feelingly; for although a man of somewhat vulgar speech and rough exterior, he was one whose heart beat with humanity, and who hated injustice. He had no friendship for mere wrong-doers, and heartily detested the whole tribe of the Ringgolds. His narration rekindled within me the indignant emotions I had experienced on first hearing of this monstrous act of cruelty; and my sympathy for Oçeola—interrupted by late suspicions—was almost restored, as I stood listening to the story of his wrongs.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A HASTY MESSENGER.

In the company of Hickman, I had walked off to some distance from the crowd, in order that our conversation should be unrestrained.

As the moments passed, the old hunter warmed into greater freedom of speech, and from his manner I fancied he had still other developments to make. I had firm faith in his devotion to our family—as well as in his personal friendship for myself—and once or twice I was on the eve of revealing to him the thoughts that rendered

me unhappy. In experience, he was a sage, and although a rude one, he might be the best counsellor I could find. I knew no other who possessed half his knowledge of the world—for Hickman had not always lived among the alligators; on the contrary, he had passed through various phases of life. I could safely trust to his devotedness: with equal safety I might confide in the resources of his judgment.

Under this belief, I should have unburdened myself of the heavy secrets weighing upon my mind — of some of them at least—had it not been that I fancied he already knew some of them. With the reappearance of Yellow Jake I knew him to be acquainted: he alleged that he had never felt sure about the mulatto's death, and had heard long ago that he was alive; but it was not of him I was thinking, but of the designs of Arens Ringgold. Perhaps Hickman knew some-

thing of these. I noticed that when his name was mentioned in connection with those of Spence and Williams, he glanced towards me a look of strange significance, as if he had something to say of these wretches.

I was waiting for him to make a disclosure, when the footfall of a fast-going horse fell upon my ear. On looking up, I perceived a horseman coming down the bank of the river, and galloping as earnestly as if riding a "quarter-race."

The horse was white, and the rider black; I recognised both at a glance; Jake was the horseman.

I stepped out from among the trees, in order that he should see me, and not pass on to the church that stood a little beyond. I hailed him as he advanced.

He both saw and heard me; and abruptly turning his horse, came galloping up to the spot where the old hunter and I were standing.

He was evidently upon an errand; but the presence of Hickman prevented him from declaring it aloud. It would not keep, however, and throwing himself from the saddle, he drew near me, and whispered it into my ear. It was just what I was expecting to hear—Arens Ringgold was at the house.

"That dam nigga am thar, Massr George."

Such was literally Jake's muttered announcement.

I received the communication with as much show of tranquility as I could assume: I did not desire that Hickman should have any knowledge of its nature, nor even a suspicion that there was anything extraordinary upon the *tapis;* so, dismissing the black messenger with a word, I turned away with the hunter; and, walking back to the church enclosure, contrived to lose him in the crowd of his comrades.

Soon after, I released my horse from his fastening; and, without saying a word to any one—not even to Gallagher—I mounted, and moved quietly off.

I did not take the direct road that led to our plantation, but made a short circuit through some woods that skirted close to the church. I did this to mislead old Hickman or any other who might have noticed the rapid arrival of the messenger; and who, had I gone directly back with him, might have held guesses that all was not right at home. To prevent this, I appeared to curious eyes to have gone in an opposite direction to the right one.

A little rough riding through the bushes brought me out into the main up-river road; and then, sinking the spur, I galloped as if life or death were staked upon the issue. My object in making such haste was simply to get to the house in time, before the clandestine

visitor—welcome guest of mother and sister —should make his adieus.

Strong reasons as I had for hating this man, I had no sanguinary purpose; it was not my design to kill Arens Ringgold — though such might have been the most proper mode to dispose of a reptile so vile and dangerous as he. Knowing him as I did, freshly spurred to angry passion by Hickman's narrative of his atrocious behaviour, I could at that moment have taken his life without fear of remorse.

But although I felt fierce indignation, I was yet neither mad nor reckless. Prudential motives — the ordinary instinct of self-safety — still had their influence over me; and I had no intention to imitate the last act in the tragedy of Samson's life.

The programme I had sketched out for myself was of a more rational character.

My design was to approach the house—

if possible, unobserved—the drawing-room as well—where of course the visitor would be found—an abrupt *entrée* upon the scene—both guest and hosts taken by surprise—the demand of an explanation from all three—a complete clearing-up of this mysterious *imbroglio* of our family relations, that was so painfully perplexing me. Face to face, I should confront the triad—mother, sister, wooer—and force all three to confession.

"Yes!" soliloquised I, with the eagerness of my intention driving the spur into the flanks of my horse. "Yes—confess they shall—they must—one and all, or—"

With the first two I could not define the alternative; though some dark design, based upon the slight of filial and fraternal love, was lurking within my bosom.

For Ringgold, should he refuse to give the truth, my resolve was first to "cow-

hide" him, then kick him out of doors, and finally command him never again to enter the house—the house, of which henceforth I was determined to be master.

As for etiquette, that was out of the question; at that hour my soul was ill attuned to the observance of delicate ceremony. No rudeness could be amiss, in dealing with a man who had tried to murder me.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LOVER'S GIFT.

As I have said, it was my design to make an entrance unobserved; consequently, it was necessary to observe caution in approaching the house. To this end, as I drew near the plantation, I turned off the main road into a path that led circuitously by the rear This path would conduct me by the hom. mock, the bathing-pond, and the orange-groves, without much danger of my approach being noticed by anyone. The slaves at work within the inclosures could see me as I rode through the grounds; but these were the

"field-hands." Unless by some of the domestics engaged in household affairs, I had no fear of being announced.

My messenger had not gone directly back; I had ordered him to await me in an appointed place, and there I found him.

Directing him to follow me, I kept on; and having passed through the fields, we rode into the thick underwood of the hommock, where halting, we dismounted from our horses. From this point I proceeded alone.

As the hunter steals upon the unexpecting game, or the savage upon his sleeping foe, did I approach the house—my home, my father's home, the home of my mother and sister. Strange conduct in a son and a brother—a singular situation.

My limbs trembled under me as I advanced, my knees knocked together, my breast was agitated by a tumult of wild emotions. Once I hesitated and halted. The prospect

of the unpleasant scene I was about to produce stayed me. My resolution was growing weak and undecided.

Perhaps I might have gone back—perhaps I might have waited another opportunity when I might effect my purpose by a less violent development—but just then voices fell upon my ear, the effect of which was to strengthen my wavering resolves. My sister's voice was ringing in laughter, that sounded light and gay. There was another—only one. I easily recognised the squeaking treble of her despicable suitor. The voices remaddened me—the tones stung me, as if they had been designedly uttered in mockery of myself. How could she behave thus? how riot in joy while I was drooping under dark suspicions of her misbehaviour?

Piqued as well as pained, I surrendered all thought of honourable action; I resolved to carry through my design, but first—to play the listener.

I drew nearer and heard clearer. The speakers were not in the house, but outside, by the edge of the orange-grove. Softly treading, gently parting the boughs, now crouching beneath them, now gliding erect, I arrived unobserved within six paces of where they stood—near enough to perceive their dresses glistening through the leaves—to hear every word that passed between them.

Not many had been spoken, before I perceived that I had arrived at a peculiar moment — a crisis. The lover had just offered himself for a husband — had, perhaps for the first time, seriously made his declaration. In all probability it was this had been eliciting my sister's laughter.

"And really, Mr. Ringgold, you wish to make me your wife? You are in earnest in what you have said?"

"Nay, Miss Randolph, do not mock me; you know for how many years I have been devoted to you."

"Indeed, I do not. How could I know that?"

"By my words. Have I not told you so a hundred times?"

"Words! I hold words of little value in a matter of this kind. Dozens have talked to me as you, who, I suppose, cared very little about me. The tongue is a great trifler, Mr. Arens."

"But my actions prove my sincerity. I have offered you my hand and my fortune; is not that a sufficient proof of devotion?"

"No, silly fellow; nothing of the sort. Were I to become your wife, the fortune would still remain your own. Besides, I have some little fortune myself, and that would come under your control. So you see the advantage would be decidedly in your favour. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nay, Miss Randolph; I should not think of controlling yours; and if you will accept my hand—"

"Your hand, sir? If you would win a woman, you should offer your *heart*—hearts, not hands, for me."

"You know that is yours already; and has been for long years; all the world knows it."

"You must have told the world, then; and I don't like it a bit."

"Really you are too harsh with me: you have had many proofs of how long and devotedly I have admired you. I would have declared myself long since, and asked you to become my wife—"

"And why did you not?"

Ringgold hesitated.

"The truth is, I was not my own master—I was under the control of my father."

"Indeed?"

"That exists no longer. I can now act as I please; and, dearest Miss Randolph, if you will but accept my hand—"

"Your hand again! Let me tell you, sir, that this hand of yours has not the reputation of being the most open one. Should I accept it, it might prove sparing of pin-money. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am aspersed by enemies. I swear to you that in that sense you should have no cause to complain of my liberality."

"I am not so sure of that, notwithstanding the oath you would take. Promises made before marriage are too often broken after. I would not trust you, my man—not I, i' faith."

"But you can trust me, I assure you."

"You cannot assure me; besides, *I* have had no proofs of your liberality in the past. Why, Mr. Ringgold, you never made me a present in your life. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Had I known you would have accepted

one—it would gratify me—Miss Randolph, I would give you anything I possess."

"Good! Now I shall put you to the test—you shall make me a gift."

"Name it—it shall be yours."

"Oh, you fancy I am going to ask you for some trifling affair—a horse, a poodle, or some bit of glittering *bijouterie*. Nothing of the sort, I assure you."

"I care not what. I have offered you my whole fortune, and therefore will not hesitate to give you a part of it. Only specify what you may desire, and I shall freely give it."

"That sounds liberal indeed. Very well, then; you have something I desire to possess—and very much desire it—in truth, I have taken a fancy to be its owner, and had some designs of making offers to you for the purchase of it."

"What can you mean, Miss Randolph?"

"A plantation."

"A plantation!"

"Exactly so. Not your own, but one of which you are the proprietor."

"Ah!"

"I mean that which formerly belonged to a family of half-bloods upon Tupelo Creek. Your father *purchased* it from them, I believe?"

I noted the emphasis upon the word "purchased." I noted hesitation and some confusion in the reply.

"Yes—yes," said he; "it was so. But you astonish me, Miss Randolph. Why care you for this, when you shall be mistress of all I possess?"

"That is my affair. I *do* care for it. I may have many reasons. That piece of ground is a favourite spot with me; it is a lovely place—I often go there. Remember, my brother is owner here—he is not likely to remain a bachelor all his

life — and my mother may desire to have a home of her own. But no; I shall give you no reasons; make the gift or not as you please."

"And if I do, you will—"

"Name conditions, and I will not accept it—not if you ask me on your knees. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall make none, then: if you will accept it, it is yours."

"Ah, that is not all, Master Arens. You might take it back, just as easily as you have given it. How am I to be sure that you would not? I must have the *deeds*."

"You shall have them."

"And when?"

"Whenever you please—within the hour, if you desire it."

"I do, then. Go, get them! But remember, sir, *I make no conditions — remember that*."

"Oh!" exclaimed the overjoyed lover, "I make none. I have no fears; I leave all to you. In an hour, you shall have them. Adieu!"

And so saying, he made a hurried departure.

I was so astonished by the nature of this dialogue—so taken by surprise at its odd ending—that for a time I could not stir from the spot. Not until Ringgold had proceeded to some distance did I recover self-possession; and then I hesitated what course to pursue—whether to follow him, or permit him to depart unmolested.

Virginia had gone away from the ground, having glided silently back into the house. I was even angrier with her than with him; and, obedient to this impulse, I left Ringgold to go free, and went straight for an explanation with my sister.

It proved a somewhat stormy scene. I found her in the drawing-room in com-

pany with my mother. I stayed for no circumlocution; I listened to no denial or appeal, but openly announced to both the character of the man who had just left the house—openly declared him my intended murderer.

"Now, Virginia! sister! will you marry this man?"

"Never, George—never! I never intended it. Never!" she repeated emphatically, as she sank upon the sofa, burying her face in her hands.

My mother was incredulous—even yet incredulous!

I was proceeding to the proofs of the astounding declaration I had made, when I heard my name loudly pronounced outside the window: some one was calling me in haste.

I ran out upon the verandah to inquire what was wanted.

In front was a man on horseback, in

blue uniform, with yellow facings—a dragoon. He was an orderly, a messenger from the fort. He was covered with dust; his horse was in a lather of sweat and foam. The condition of both horse and man shewed that they had been going for hours at top-speed.

The man handed me a piece of paper —a dispatch hastily scrawled. It was addressed to Gallagher and myself. I opened and read:—

"*Bring on your men to Fort King as fast as their horses can carry them. The enemy is around us in numbers; every rifle is wanted—lose not a moment.*

"CLINCH."

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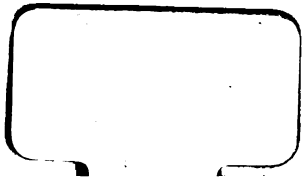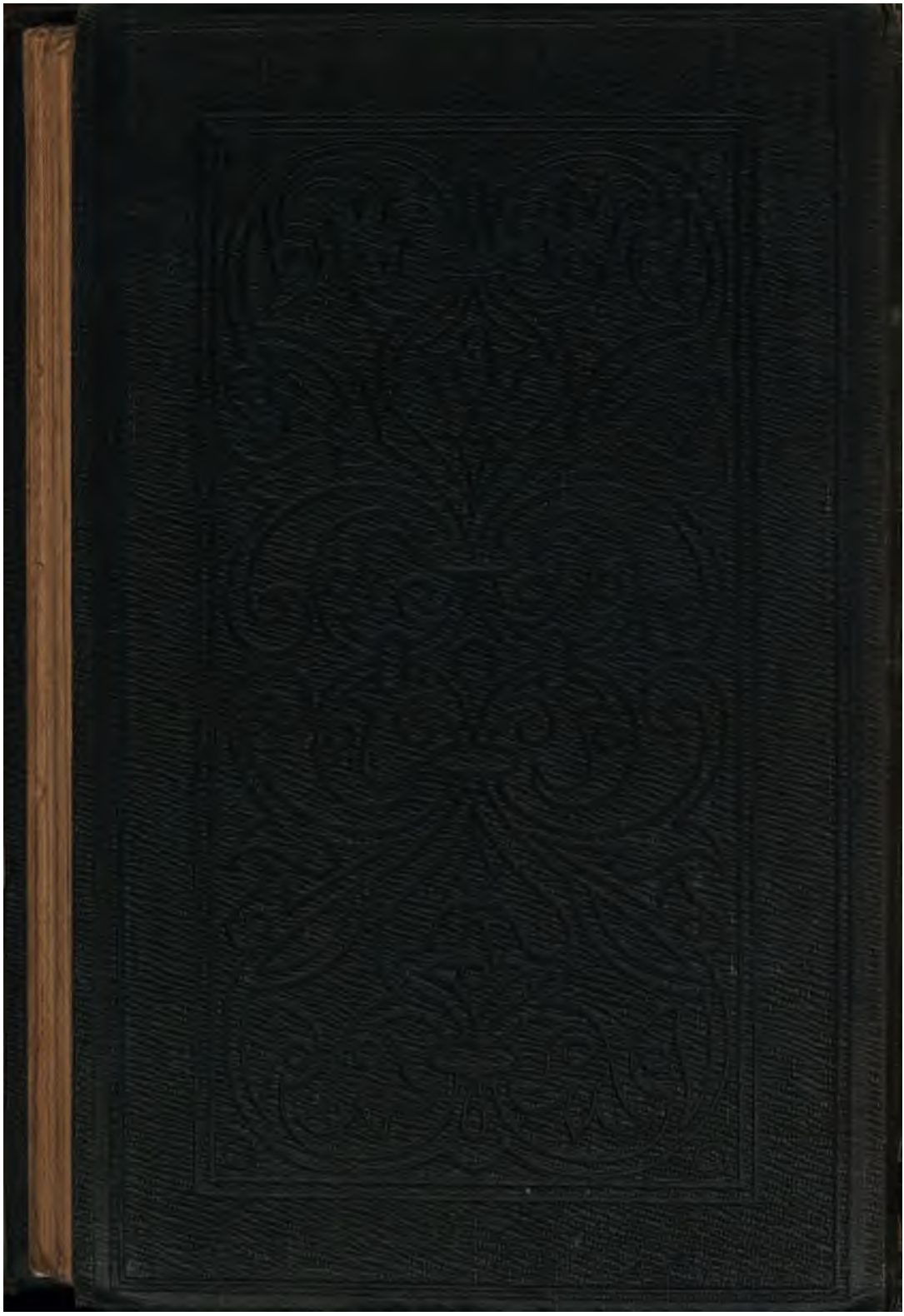
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